For the combined ideals of national freedom and deliverance of the working people he gave his life.—*H. W. Nevinson*

JAMES CONOLLY

HIS LIFE, WORK AND WRITINGS

by

DESMOND RYAN

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JAMES CONNOLLY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE MAN CALLED PEARSE

THE STORY OF A SUCCESS: Being a Record of St. Enda's College September 1908 to Easter 1916

JAMES CONNOLLY
HIS LIFE WORK & WRITINGS

By DESMOND RYAN B.A.

WITH A PREFACE BY
H. W. NEVINSON

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To

ALL WHO FELL IN
THE IRISH CIVIL WAR

June, 1922—April, 1923

PREFACE

By Henry W. Nevinson

The first time that I met James Connolly, I felt a difference between him and the other famous Irish patriots whom I had known. I think it must have been early in 1912, the year before he rose to fame in the great strike of the Irish Transport Workers' Union. We were speaking on the same platform in Dublin, and the difference I noticed was a greater breadth and depth of view than I had found in the numerous patriotic speeches I had heard up to that time. Connolly was as good an Irish patriot as could be found, and no one has surpassed him in devoted service to the Irish people. But his patriotism took a form at that time uncommon, and to me all the more attractive, because it was so fresh and practical in its aims. He knew the crimes of English government, but he was not perpetually mumbling and grumbling over them. He knew the history of Ireland's wrongs, but he was not going to harp upon them for ever. If patriotism meant merely the assertion of nationality, he would have agreed with the nurse who, at her execution, said that patriotism was not enough. Much of Ireland's misery was due to England's imperialism; much was inherited from England's atrocities in the past. But there were causes of misery which affected not Ireland alone, but England as well—affected indeed the whole world. I quickly understood that Connolly was not merely a Nationalist rebel; he was a world-wide revolutionist.

I attributed the difference to his Ulster upbringing, his boyhood in Edinburgh and England, and his seven years' residence in the United States. It was the living and actual people of Ireland that he saw—the workers in the Belfast

docks and mills, the dwellers in the Dublin slums. One should read in this carefully written book the quotations from his own writings—such quotations as the heading to Chapter IV. (" Ireland as distinct from the people is nothing to me," &c.), or the account of the Belfast dockers on p. 51, or of Dublin's condition on pp. 58, 59. The sufferings of his people were the things that moved him to the heart, and those sufferings were not to be healed by old-fashioned Nationalism alone. He had long known poverty himself, and it was the knowledge of such conditions as he still saw around him that made him Socialist, Marxian, Communist, or whatever title you care to apply to one who stood in rebellion, not against a Government merely, but against the British and European basis of society. He remained a Republican Irishman, as was proved by his life and his death, but with all that Nationalist patriotism he combined a devotion to the cause of poor people and the common workers which was then rare in Ireland, and the finer for its rarity. As to political aims and rebellions, he frequently maintained that he would not be satisfied till his country held the same position as Australia, Canada, and the Cape. Much has now been gained—more, I suppose, than even he could have hoped for in so short a time—and the author of this book inclines to think that Connolly would have been content to accept the present Free State " as a step, and an appreciable step, towards the co-operative commonwealth of his heart's desire." Things move, and it is dangerous, especially for an Englishman, to endorse such a prophecy. But if Connolly had only lived, I think he would have enjoyed certain sayings of his most celebrated fellow-countryman : " Ireland is at this moment a regular rag and bottle shop of superseded ideas. . . . Let us pension off all our old Nationalists, since we cannot, without ingratitude, drown them. . . . Let the fisherman who strays on Lough Neagh's bank when the clear cold eve's declining be thrown into it. And then Ireland will have a chance at last." *

* Bernard Shaw in "The Irish Statesman," No. I., (Sept. 15, 1923).

Connolly was an excellent speaker, because his mind was clear, and he had something definite to say. The speeches I heard from him, both in Dublin and in London, were free from hesitation and, best of all, free from rhetoric. He was never windy, cloudy, or doctrinaire. He never lost himself, or lost time in those abstract discussions that weary the very soul out of one at most Socialist meetings. Whether he was speaking on the wrongs of the workers, the wrongs of women (a favourite subject with him) or the wrongs of Ireland, sentence after sentence came out clear and sharp, always striking immediate points in the actual daily life of the people. Perhaps age and repeated boredom have rather exaggerated my horror of the doctrinaire ; but at all events, when Connolly got up, I knew that there would be no wasting time in eloquent generalities or sandy deserts of abstraction. One would hear something genuine, something that one could grasp with both hands, as one would grasp an enemy by the throat. Wit he certainly had, and I like his comparison of the Irish-American politicians to descendants of the serpents banished from Ireland by St. Patrick. Imagination he had, as was proved by his close friendship with A. E. But he was never tempted by imagination into sentiment, or by wit into the buffoonery that crowds enjoy.

He supported the Parliamentary system ; I suppose because, however faulty, it is on the whole the least tyrannical form of government. But one great saying of his (p. 81) remains with me as the only real defence of democracy : " It is not the will of the majority which ultimately prevails ; that which ultimately prevails is the ideal of the noblest in each generation." I cannot for the life of me see any other reason for obeying the will of the majority except that, though the majority may be wrong, it does in time yield to the ideals of the noblest in each generation. And among those noblest of my own generation, I shall always reckon James Connolly, for his ideals were indeed the very highest. For the combined ideals of national freedom and deliverance of the working people he gave his life. He knew well enough that, so far as material and immediate victory went, Easter Week

was a hopeless exploit. "We are marching out to be slaughtered," he said to the Labour leader, William O'Brien (p. 126), and slaughtered he was—a prisoner, wounded, dragged in a chair to execution because he was too weak to stand. Decent people no longer kill the wounded, no longer shoot their prisoners. For that murderous crime against all the established rules of war as laid down for the observance of decent people, the memory of a bloody stain will always rest upon those who gave the order for Connolly's death, and upon those who did not mutinously refuse to carry it out. But for himself, as he said, he could have wished no better end, and his victory lies in the spirit, not only of his own people, but of the noblest in the whole generation. Of him, I think, we may repeat what I once wrote of all rebels whose cause had been as high; and I am proud to learn that the words were welcomed by Patrick Pearse, who was Connolly's comrade in action, and who shared his fate:

"It is a fine reward when the slow world comes swinging round to your despised and persecuted cause, while the defeated persecutor whines at your feet that at heart he was with you all the time. If the rebel fails—well, it is a terrible thing to fail in rebellion. Bodily or social execution is almost inevitably the result. But whether he wins or loses, he will have enjoyed a comradeship such as is nowhere else to be found. His spirit will have been illumined by a hope and an indignation that make the usual aims and satisfactions of the world appear trivial and fond. To him it has been given to hand on the torch of that impassioned movement and change by which the soul of man appears to be slowly working out its transfiguration. And if he dies in the attempt, he may still hope that some glimmer of freedom will shine where he is buried." *

* Essays in Rebellion: Page 26.

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"We believe in constitutional action in normal times; we believe in revolutionary action in exceptional times."—*Dec.* 4, 1915.

"The Working Class can only think and speak in language as hard and definite as its life. We have no room for illusions in our struggle, least of all for illusions about freedom."—*July* 31, 1915.

"The Cause of Labour is the Cause of Ireland. The Cause of Ireland is the Cause of Labour."—*April* 15, 1916.

JAMES CONNOLLY

CHAPTER I

THE SECRET OF CONNOLLY

In his wide humanity and grasp of the fact that the greater includes the less lies the secret of James Connolly's power, achievement and magnetism. He never forgot that the greater includes the less : the International, the nations, subject classes, races and sexes. Even yet he stands alone, none too well understood by friend or foe, leaving behind some enkindling books, much scattered writing in obscure propaganda sheets, a flourishing Labour movement, a martyr's grave. Irish of the Irish was this James Connolly —let there be no mistake about that !—Ireland without her people little to him, it is true, but grateful to the fate, at the bottom of his heart, that staged there the greater dramas of a stirring life.

Too long has this real greatness been dimmed by followers who repeat his phrases, and neglect the lessons he taught. Far too long has party enthusiasm exploited his memory and obscured his ideals with that blend of insidious suppression and honeyed homage, at which Irish party politicians of all the tribe are such peerless adepts. For, truth to tell, Connolly is less awkward to them as an honoured corpse than as an evangelist of unpopular and little-understood theories. From the very first his biographers are faced with the difficulty whether to write as propagandists or to attempt an intimate study few living men could write, to play, as inclination dictates, the gramophone or the Boswell. Somewhere he has written * of his countrymen that they are not philoso-

* "Labour in Irish History," 1910.

phers, since they pass too swiftly from thought to action. The charge is not wholly applicable to himself—no enervated idealist, epicurean in emotions, or ponderer on the aspects of a question, he ! But it must be insisted, from the outset, that he was definitely Marxian, Separatist, and Workers' Republican, applying these clear-cut social and political creeds to varying crises in an eventful career upon the unfailing maxim " that the true revolutionist must ever call into action upon his side the entire sum of all the forces and factors of political and social discontent."*

In the final phase one finds his early ideas in action, a matured philosophy, perfected methods, the definite beginnings of the revolutionary movements of 1913 and 1916—the white flame of inspiration, the light of ultimate victory—the propagandist, Labour leader, revolutionary, martyr, rebel and prophet before his time, unchanging but developing until life gave out, and behind it all a burning heart and intellect, crystal-clear and keen as steel.

Broadly speaking, James Connolly must be classified as a Workers' Republican and Communist. The doctrines and methods that the Russian Revolution has since familiarised were his. He would certainly have been at one with Lenin in destruction and construction alike. He might well have made Trotsky's proud surrender at Brest Litovsk, believing assuredly that " the problem was not how to perish with honour, but how in the end to live through to victory." † Beyond doubt, Connolly would have been bold and capable enough to measure the sword of argument with either, as he had measured it fearlessly against British and American Labour advocates and Irish Nationalists, from the mildest to the most extreme in his own time and day. Upon every argument and upon the active phases of his lifetime he stamped the impress of a strong and original personality—" the only true prophets are they who carve out the future they announce." ‡

* " Erin's Hope."
† Trotsky in " History of the Russian Revolution."
‡ " Reconquest of Ireland," Chap. VIII.

"Yours, fighting and hoping," he concluded many an epistle, summing up unconsciously his character. Wherever Connolly went he won over many a convert to his beliefs by some casual and powerful phrase in some concentrated and eloquent address from a street corner in Dublin or Glasgow, or by some passage in British or American journal; university students, labourers, soldiers, schoolmasters, Nationalist advocates, journalists, have paused to listen, and then resume accustomed paths through life—now vivid and relighted with some telling phrase. In retort he was withering, restrained and humorous, advising his working-class listeners to spend more time in libraries than in public-houses, and sending his middle-class opponents in controversy hot-foot to the former institutions in despair. Two full and kindly keen grey eyes burned beneath dark bushy eyebrows; broad forehead crowned by black hair; medium in height; calm and imperturbable outwardly, but beneath invariably a sensitive and tense nervous system. That human heart beats yet; his spell and personality rise up vividly for those who read carefully Connolly's published writings—as unequivocal and challenging as of old.

Casting a glance to-day over Ireland, the land he loved best when all is said, one must credit James Connolly with much: a Labour movement, independent politically, industrially well-knit and militant, with a growing body of sympathisers outside its own ranks; an increasing sensitiveness to social issues, and the importance of the economic factor in human life or in national history; tomes from economists and sociologists; the invective of Communists. And recalling recent developments there, the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the Irish Free State, the tragic Civil War, and partisan claims upon Connolly's name and corpse, one inclines upon the whole to define his probable attitude as that of the official Irish Labour Party. Surely his voice, pen and personal influence would have aided that Party in its opposition to the Civil War, its disinterested attempts to avert that folly, its efforts to find a basis of reconciliation between Free Stater and Republican, and its acceptance, in all the circumstances, of the machinery

of the Irish Free State as a step, and as an appreciable step, towards the co-operative commonwealth of his heart's desire.

Friends and colleagues of his, with every claim to understand his thought and motives, have upheld that view; he knew his "opportunity and when it was gone," * while his words on the eve of 1916 are suggestive, at least: "The moment peace is once admitted by the British Government as being a subject ripe for discussion, that moment our policy will be for peace and in direct opposition to all talk or preparation for armed revolution. We shall be no parties to leading out Irish patriots to meet the might of an England at peace. The moment peace is in the air we shall strictly confine ourselves and lend all our influence to the work of turning the thought of Labour in Ireland to the work of peaceful reconstruction." † True, his own relatives, many who fell under Connolly's influence, notably the late Liam Mellowes,‡ have thought otherwise or followed a more stormy path in recent days with the phrases of Communists and the hearts of doctrinaire Republicans; but, significantly enough, Connolly's old colleague, Larkin, returns from America to abandon militant Republican cries for the more peaceful slogan of "Lay down your arms!"

In the pages which follow, to leave perhaps profitless conjectures, little more has been achieved than a record of facts, opinions and recollections of James Connolly, gathered in the hope that the bewildering events of our day may not dim beyond recognition the true image of a great Labour

* "We know our opportunity when we see it, and we know when it has gone. We know that at the end of this war England will have at least an army of one million men, or *more than two soldiers for every adult male in Ireland*. And these soldiers veterans of the greatest war in history. We shall not want to fight those men. We shall devote our attention to organising their comrades who return to civil life, to organising them into trade unions and Labour parties, to secure them their rights in civil life—unless we emigrate to some country where there are men."—*Workers' Republic*, January, 1916.

† *Workers' Republic*, January, 1916. See also Chap. VI., Pearse and Connolly.

‡ Executed by the Irish Free State Government as "a reprisal." Speeches in America and documents published by the Free State Publicity Department clearly reveal his Communist leanings.

thinker, fighter, and pioneer. It is the writer's hope that a survey of James Connolly's career and writings may help to remove some of the mists which even yet obscure the real greatness of an outstanding figure of the twentieth century, a patriot, a hero dear indeed to his own kin, but heir to a wider admiration and fame. Two facts, now generally conceded, alone assure him immortality. In large part, his brain directed the great Labour upheaval of Dublin in 1913. And is it necessary to recall his part in the Insurrection of 1916, his citizen army, barely 120 strong, armed for the most part with shot-guns, or his thunders of revolt ; first builder of an insurgent barricade in a war-racked Europe ?

Recognition grows, too, of his influence upon many flourishing movements and organisations. Whether as an early organiser of the Industrial Workers of the World in America, or as an advocate of the " sympathetic strike " at home, he exerted an incalculable influence upon new tendencies in the International Labour movement. Guild Socialism,* Communism, Syndicalism or Industrial Unionism owe not a little to his " Axe to the Root " and " Socialism Made Easy." Advocates of these various schools have drawn on these and his other American writings. Lenin himself has spoken in cordial terms of " Labour in Irish History " to Irish trade unionist visitors to Russia, ranking Connolly as a remarkable man who—like the American Daniel De Leon, an influence on Connolly's earlier thought—anticipated Soviet ideas.

Connolly's Industrial Unionism, so minutely set forth in the " Axe to the Root," was foremost in his thoughts and acts. He felt that the working class was closest to the realities of life, and denied the right of the capitalist and middle classes to pose as the nation. In the Land League he saw a precious legacy of wisdom, political and revolutionary : a foreshadowing of his ideal of one great organisation of Irish Labour " with one card, one badge, one executive and one common enemy." Later he had the satisfaction of witness-

* See " Guild Socialism Re-Stated," by G. D. H. Cole (Parsons, London), for a discussion of these new tendencies.

ing his ideal in action in the swift "sympathetic strikes" of the Larkin revolt. There was no theoretical perfection here, he agreed, but no new order could replace the old until capable of performing the latter's functions more effectively for human needs. Doubtless his approving shade watches the powerful 250,000 membership of the closely-linked industrial units associated with the I.T.G.W.U. and the small Labour group in Dail Eireann. He stressed militancy of the rank and file rather than numerical strength. In "Old Wine in New Bottles" he writes : *

"As one of the earliest organisers of that body (I.W.W.) I desire to emphasise also that as a means of creating in the working class the frame of mind necessary to the upbuilding of this new order within the old we taught, and I have yet seen no reason to reconsider our attitude on thismatter, that the interests of one were the interests of all, and that no consideration of a contract with a section of the capitalist class absolved any section of us from the duty of taking instant action to protect other sections when said sections were in danger from the capitalist enemy. Our attitude always was that in the swiftness and unexpectedness of our action lay our chief hopes of temporary victory and, since permanent peace was an illusory hope until permanent victory was secured, temporary victories were all that need concern us. We realised that every victory gained by the working class would be followed by some capitalist development that would in the course of time tend to nullify it, but until that development was perfect the fruits of our victory would be ours to enjoy, and the resultant moral effect would be of incalculable value to the character and mental attitude of our class towards their rulers."

These Industrial Unionist ideals occupied Connolly's thoughts to the end. At a later stage, in August, 1915, we find him urging a conference of Labour Societies generally in Ireland to discuss the One Big Union Idea, he urging that federation was not sufficient, but amalgamation *versus* slavery was the issue, while in February, 1916, when he was

* *New Age*, April 30th, 1914.

planning revolt, he finds time to condemn severely the constitution of the Triple Alliance in Great Britain as " the usual English method, copied from their lords and rulers, of strangling real freedom whilst ostentatiously parading the forms of democracy. . . . The frequent rebellion against stupid and spiritless leadership and the call of the rank and file for true industrial unity seems to have spurred the leaders on, not to respond to the new spirit but to evolve a method whereby under the forms of unity [it] could be trammelled and fettered, . . . a scheme to *prevent* united action rather than to facilitate it." *

All existing political Irish parties Connolly criticised on grounds unwelcome to the lords of the party machines. Unity gained by suppression of truth he abhorred. The ideal of Nationalist politicians—mild or fiery—of employers making fortunes and workers grinding out their lives for a weekly wage, " the busy hum of industries," etc., did not appeal to him. He cared not a fig for political institutions in themselves. He believed that Ireland belonged of right to the workers of Ireland, and measured Irish progress by the control Irish workers gained over the lands, factories, and wealth of Ireland.

Always from his youth an avowed and convinced Separatist—" It is the union of mind that should bind these countries together. We shall love one another if we are left to ourselves," he quoted frequently. Connolly held with P. H. Pearse and James Fintan Lalor that political freedom was valueless which made certain rich men and not the entire people of Ireland effectual owners of the resources of the nation. But he was definitely *Workers'* Republican and Separatist.

From the *Workers' Republic* of 1898, through the *Harp*, to the *Workers' Republic* of 1916, the Separatist message is the same : †

" Ireland has, for seven centuries, struggled in the grasp of England. For seven hundred years Ireland has seen no

* *Workers' Republic*, February 12th, 1916.
† *Ibid.*, December 18th, 1915.

generation which did not attempt insurrection aiming at driving the English power out of Ireland—for seven hundred years, with the exception of the one brief period in the eighteenth century, during which the religious persecution strangled every thought of national regeneration. The conquest of Ireland and the battle for the reconquest has ebbed and flowed, but never ceased. England has insisted that her very life demanded that Ireland should be stripped of all the essentials of true nationhood, that it was not possible that Ireland should be mistress of her own destinies and England live."

"Therefore, that England should remain an empire, Ireland must remain a subject nation. From this standpoint England has not to this day receded a millionth part of an inch. At the beginning of this war England had given Ireland a promise of a Parliament possessing certain local powers, but not possessing any of those national powers possessed by any independent nationality, by the free states of the German Empire or the Colonial Parliaments of the British Empire. But this power, small and restricted as it was, was still too much to give freely. . . . England having affirmed her determination to retain all the spoils of conquest asked Ireland to forgive and forget, and send her sons to rally to the defence of her conqueror and despoiler."

James Connolly was a Marxian Socialist. His Marxism was living; he had read widely and deeply in the literature of Socialism, checked by his experience as a worker, and a student of Irish history. It would, indeed, be unjust to Connolly's memory and obscure his teaching to ignore the inspiration he drew from that great-hearted, human and learned German thinker, philosopher and fighter, or from the more advanced Socialist organisations in Great Britain. Readers of Connolly's writings cannot well ignore the influence. Yet constantly we hear lectures to Labour leaders from party politicians for attempting to set "class above nation," for not taking part in a civil war or for claiming a right to independent representation, for not "trusting the men in the saddle," etc., etc. James Connolly's name is not

unfrequently invoked upon these occasions amidst rapturous applause, whilst "Labour in Irish History" grows more and more dusty upon many devout bookshelves.

Let us endeavour to clear away these misconceptions and ascertain accurately what Connolly understood by Socialism, and by what methods he hoped to realise his ideal. He belonged to a Marxian Socialist school which to-day has become better known as Communism. The Socialist Labour Party in America and Great Britain early broke away from the general Labour and Socialist movements which relied upon parliamentary action exclusively. It based itself upon Marxism no less than its rivals, and looked to that Industrial Unionism, to which we have referred, to free the working class from capitalism. The underlying spirit was well expressed in the phrase of Eugene Debs: "Too long have the workers of the world waited for some Moses to lead them out of bondage. He has not come; he never will come. I would not lead you out if I could; for if you could be led out, you could be led back again." * These Socialists preached the "class war," insisting they but pointed out a social fact inevitable where capitalism existed.

They held that the working and employing classes had nothing in common, and that the inevitable struggle would proceed until all the workers united on the political and industrial fields "to take and hold" all they produced through an economic organisation—the Industrial Union: the New Parliament of Industry, in which the new order would be built within the very framework of the old.

Afterwards Connolly modified the somewhat rigid Marxism of his earlier years, but it must be admitted, rather in expression than fact. He left the Socialist Labour Party in America, certainly, while varied experiences in different movements at home and in the U.S.A. matured and mellowed him, but his writings on Industrial Unionism have been used by Communists the world over as authoritative expositions of their gospel. To-day, certainly, alive, Connolly

* In an address at Grand Central Palace, New York, December 10th, 1905.

would cordially agree with those Communist exponents* who advise the English workers, if in power, to let Ireland have absolute freedom to separate from Great Britain, even were the results of that separation economically harmful to both countries. That expresses his own consistent teaching in two continents.

Self-determination! Years before Trotsky coined the phrase, Connolly had dinned the teaching into the ears of Home Rule Imperialists, British Labourists, and American Marxists alike, unflinchingly. He did it with the same thoroughness and sincerity as he applied his own social creed, prudently but firmly, to Ireland, where alleged religious prejudices and a widespread worship of a mechanical and outward unity combined to make not only Socialist propaganda, but even independent political and economic Labour organisation, an almost impossible task. But impossible was as big " a fool of a word " to Connolly as to Napoleon."

We should do wrong, all the same, to quote his earlier writings as altogether representative of the man, or ignore his realism as a Labour leader, or Republican soldier. If ever a leader in history scorns to use new weapons in changing circumstances, or to modify his views before fresh facts, that leader has none of Connolly's courageous spirit or vision. Sadly Ireland needs his vision at the present hour, that vision of the true reconquest of Ireland: social and political independence from servitude of every man, woman, and child in Ireland. " Ah! " the present writer once heard him declare at a meeting where some unusually candid home truth had aroused ignorant opposition: " We Irish are a glorious people, we are a very agreeable people as long as critics do not tell us anything unflattering; physically brave, we would march up to the very mouths of guns, but we, too often, quail before the roar of public opinion."

Labour in Ireland in recent years has not deserved that criticism upon the whole. Throughout the years since

* " The A. B. C. of Communism," by N. Buharin and E. Preobrazhensky (Communist Party of Great Britain), 1922, pp. 198, 199.

Connolly and his Nationalist allies joined forces, the Labour movement has placed all its brains, strength and resources at the service of the whole Irish nation, even foregoing its right at stages to be represented in the nation's councils, but standing, in most changing circumstances, ever for the reconquest of Ireland in Connolly's way and in Connolly's spirit. Upon the eve of the Civil War the Labour leaders exercised every resource and effort possible to bring peace, and aroused the anger of the war parties in each camp by vehement cries of "A plague on you both!" when civil war came. "Too often we quail. . . ."

Before passing on to those facts, which James Connolly "respected more than a bishop," it will not be amiss to conclude upon his words, "Internationalism means the free federation of free nations," * and remember that "Labour in Ireland tends to become more and more self-reliant, and in its self-reliance it discovers its strength. Out of such strong self-reliance it develops a magnetism which will draw to it more and more support from all the adherents of all the causes which in their entirety make for a regenerated Ireland."†

"The Gaelic Leaguer realises that capitalism did more in one century to destroy the tongue of the Gael than the Saxon did in six; the apostle of self-reliance amongst Irish men and women finds no more earnest exponents of self-reliance than those who expound it as the creed of Labour; the earnest advocates of co-operation find the workers stating their ideals as a co-operative commonwealth; the earnest teacher of Christian morality sees that in co-operative commonwealth alone will true morality be possible, and the fervent patriot learns that his hope of an Ireland re-born to national life is better stated and can be better and more completely realised in the Labour movement for the reconquest of Ireland."

James Connolly knew that the greater includes the less!

* Quoted in *Voice of Labour*, May 10th, 1919.
† "Reconquest of Ireland," Chap. IX.

CHAPTER II

EARLY YEARS

Biographers of James Connolly have no inspiring or glorious family trees to water with admiring adulation, no flamboyant mottoes or battle-cries to record, no martyred ancestors to weep over. Indeed, Connolly himself would have discouraged such research with his usual reticence. "I have no ancestors!" he once humorously informed an American pressman, agog for such details. "Particulars regarding his early training and education are scarce because there were none," his old friend, Murtagh Lyng, of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, declares.* "Connolly was 'dragged up' like most proletarian boys. Connolly, nevertheless, is well educated. His education is of that sort which comes from conflict with circumstances. . . . His whole character has been coloured by these circumstances, which have been bitter, and he has a deep hatred of those institutions which have weighed so heavily on the working class. In his youth he was a Nationalist of the extreme type."

Few legends or facts have come down to us as regards his early childhood, which was spent near Clones, Co. Monaghan, Ulster. We do not know whether he lived in a cabin on a hillside, his early teachers, or whether he cut down a cherry tree, read "Robinson Crusoe," or played at marbles, Red Indians, or football. He was born on June 5th, 1870, and passed ten years of his childhood in the north of Ireland, then shaken by tremors and explosions of the coming land war, some of the most stirring battles of the campaign being staged there. His parents we know little of beyond the fact that the father was a labourer. Hungry children thronged the school-houses throughout Ulster in

* *Weekly People*, New York, September 16th, 1902.

1879, thanks to the distress caused by a partial failure of the potato crop, and many humble folk sought refuge in emigration.

In 1880 Connolly's family, too, became exiles, and arrived in Edinburgh, where his father obtained work as a corporation dustman. James became a printer's devil in the office of the local *Evening News*, where his elder brother also worked. He was then under the legal age, but his employers for a year defeated the law by placing him upon a stool before a " case " whenever a factory inspector appeared. One day an inspector came on the scene more lynx-eyed than the rest : Connolly was pronounced too young despite the stratagem, inquiries followed, and the boy was unemployed. But he was lucky enough to find work soon afterwards in a bakery. As his sole means of support, he regarded this bakehouse with an affection in which mingled romance and terror. In his prayers he remembered it, and in horrible nightmares frequently beheld his sanctuary in flames, with consequent unemployment for himself, and famine for his good Scottish fellow-citizens. Health broke beneath the strain, and for two years a mosaic tiling factory was his refuge.

Already the evils of industrialism, the grim housing conditions of the great city, moved him to vague reflection and revolt. The company of his uncle, an old Fenian, kept vivid in his memory the glamour and agony of the national struggle. Mitchel, too, he read, and much Irish history. Brooding, intense, silent, outwardly cold and inwardly aflame, a spirit of adventure called him to new scenes. Leaving Edinburgh at eighteen, Connolly was in turn tramp, navvy, and pedlar, spending a roving and eventful life in different parts of Britain. Personally he was reticent upon this early chapter, but one gathers that he read enormously, and his social sympathies awoke, bitter, questioning, much in the mood of his poem to his son,* " The Legacy " :

* Mr. Roderick Connolly, now associated with the small Communist group in Dublin. He has edited the party organ, the *Workers' Republic*, and visited Russia upon several occasions.

" Thy father is a poor man," mark well what that may mean,
On the tablets of thy memory that truth write bright and clean,
Thy father's lot it was to toil from earliest boyhood on,
And know his latent energies for a master's profit drawn.

Or else, ill-starred, to wander round and huckster-like to vend
His precious store of brain and brawn to all whom fate may send
Across his path with gold enough to purchase Labour's power,
To turn it into gold again, and fructify the hour
With sweat and blood of toiling slaves like unto us my son;
Aye, through our veins since earliest days, 'tis poor man's blood has run. . . .

Treasure ye in your inmost heart this legacy of hate
For those who on the poor man's back have climbed to high estate,
The lords of land and capital, the slave lords of our age,
Who of this smiling earth of ours have made for us a cage. . . .

And howsoe'er you earn your wage, and wheresoe'er you go,
Be it beneath the tropic heat or 'mid the northern snow,
Or closely pent in factory walls, or burrowing in the mine,
Or scorching in the furnace hell of steamers 'cross the brine. . . .

The men and women of your class, tell them their wrongs and yours—
Plant in their hearts that hatred deep that suffers and endures,
And treasuring up each deed of wrong, each scornful word and look,
Inscribe it in the memory, as others in a book.
And wait and watch through galling years the ripening of time,
Yet deem to strike before that hour were worse than folly —crime!

For a spell he settled in Glasgow. Upon a short visit to Dublin he met his future wife, Miss Lillie Reynolds, a quiet, home-loving woman, a sympathetic companion, thoroughly

in accord with her husband's ideals. He was married in Perth at the age of twenty-one. In the interval an accident to his father had recalled him to Edinburgh. His parent was permanently disabled, and James Connolly took up his work as dustman in the cleansing department of the corporation. Already his self-education was complete. Many tomes of ancient and modern history had he handled, the revolutionary phases of Irish history in particular, the poetry of Moore, Davis, J. F. O'Donnell, Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, the thunders of Carlyle, some odd essays of Mazzini, Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic," were already familiar treasures to him. And his thoughts were much occupied by Karl Marx's "Capital," Frederick Engel's "Condition of the Working Class in England," "Socialism—Utopian and Scientific," and volumes similar in spirit and scope. For James Connolly had transformed his earlier Nationalism, as interpreted by his Fenian uncle, into Revolutionary Socialism.

William Morris, H. M. Hyndman, and their comrades of the Social Democratic Federation, drunk with Marxian vintage, were abroad, spreading a new social gospel with missionary zeal. Throughout Great Britain a vigorous Socialist propaganda was in full swing. John Leslie, a prominent evangelist of the S.D.F., spoke at the many meetings Connolly and his uncle attended. His arguments completed Connolly's conversion. Eventually Leslie was to be responsible for Connolly's concentration upon Ireland as a pioneer of the Labour and Socialist evangel there. Indeed, traces of Leslie's pamphlet, published in the 'eighties by the S.D.F., "The Present Position of the Irish Question," appear plainly in Connolly's earlier writings. Briefly, that pamphlet's argument was anti-Parliamentary party, anti-clerical in the Fenian and Land League sense of the words, and anti-capitalist. Leslie, like Connolly and all Socialist critics of the time, eulogised the land struggle as the greatest of Irish movements from the working-class point of view, bluntly declaring that the plain people had been drawn from sober thought and due consideration of life, liberty and happiness by spectacular agitation and interested rhetoric.

In Michael Davitt, scarred physically, as Connolly had been scarred mentally, by the industrial system, they mourned a fallen idol. If Davitt would only follow out his dream of a new democratic organisation of labour, land nationalisation, extension of State and municipal ownership, control of monopolies by public bodies in the common interest as expounded in his *Labour World* from September, 1890, onwards, that were more hopeful! But it was for Connolly to realise and improve upon Davitt's dream.

Slowly Connolly had tested, proved and applied his new gospel—henceforth his till death. Long a silent listener at Leslie's meetings, he electrified the audiences on several occasions by passionate interventions, routing hecklers with concentrated and fierce outbursts of eloquence. Joining the party he developed into a persuasive and foremost Socialist orator, conquering in the process a grave impediment of speech by sheer will-power. His persistent propaganda brought converts in plenty, but also aroused the meanest opposition in Edinburgh. A brother, also in the corporation service, was victimised. As a protest Connolly was nomibated as a Socialist candidate for St. Giles' Ward, polling 300 against his opponents' 1,200, after a campaign characterised by " punch " and intensity. Wild and enthusiastic scenes marked the many meetings held all over Edinburgh, which are remembered there to-day.

Obliged to resign his job before he could become a candidate, Connolly, unemployed, tried his luck as a shoemaker. The occupation was congenial. He had time for reflection, hammering out upon his last more things than shoe leather. As a financial venture, the experiment did not prove successful. The quarter chosen by his friends for the small cobbler's shop proved unsuitable. Undaunted, James Connolly turned his thoughts to emigration ; he would try his fortunes as a farmer in distant Chili, and mayhap there would be other developments. The Chilian Government had guaranteed him a free grant of land, tools, a passage, and his passport was quite in order when Mrs. Connolly and John Leslie protested and dissuaded him. The imagination is

intrigued by what might have happened in that remote South American Republic. But let Chili rest peaceful, poorer, perchance, by a dictator the less, or be content with potential or actual Presidents less brilliant!

Leslie, knowing that only by true ideas may doubtful ones be expelled, had the brilliant notion of suggesting to Connolly that far-off and dramatic possibilities of Chilian life be abandoned for a nearer and more formidable task. Let James Connolly return to Ireland and take up the task for which birth, sympathy and knowledge peculiarly fitted him. Let him break the first Socialist lance against the economic and political windmills of Ireland; slash the first Socialist sword into what rich Irish wine-skins be found, and make war upon divers dragons, serpents, legends, ghouls, bogies, and giants cumbering the soil there, to the distress and bemusement of the commonalty. That fired James Connolly who cried: "Agreed!"

So in the early months of 1896 Connolly and his family reached Dublin. Shortly afterwards the Irish Socialist Republican Party was founded, with its organ the *Workers' Republic*. On his arrival he worked for a short while on the main drainage as a navvy, and next as a proof-reader on the *Sunday World Weekly*, and finally as party organiser of the I.S.R.P. As the party was small in numbers and weak in finances a weekly salary of £1 a week proved irregular.

The *Workers' Republic* appeared first, August 13th, 1898, bearing the legend in Irish and English: "The great appear great only because we are on our knees, let us arise!" Keir Hardie, always a close personal friend, backed the venture with a £50 loan. Eleven numbers appeared in all, in which the opening chapters of "Labour in Irish History" were first published. The paper had a fitful career, enlivened by the editor's trenchant leading articles and quizzing brieflets. The *Workers' Republic* was produced subsequently by voluntary labour, members of the I.S.R.P. becoming adepts at setting up type and working a modest hand press. Denounced as "blacklegs" these enthusiasts were exonerated by Connolly's appearance before the Dublin

Typographical Association. He asked ironically whether the private use of razors meant blacklegging on barbers. The Children of Light were allowed to type-set in peace thereafter.

To return to the fortunes of the first Irish Socialists. The Irish Socialist Republican Party consisted of a few working men Connolly had succeeded in interesting in his contention " that the two currents of revolutionary thought in Ireland, Nationalist and Socialist, were not antagonistic, but complementary " *—the idea strongly emphasised in his first pamphlets, " The New Evangel " and " Erin's Hope." Amongst the earliest members of the party were William O'Brien, Thomas Lyng, Murtagh Lyng, Daniel O'Brien, E. Stewart, W. Bradshaw, and in Cork Con Lehane, afterwards an active propagandist in Great Britain and the United States.† Ireland was inert and disillusioned after the fierce passions of the Parnell Split, disgruntled politicians snarled at one another ; their intrigues, rhetoric and squabbles had succeeded the militant semi-constitutional movement the genius and personal spell of Parnell had elevated above a demand for " gas and water Home Rule " within the British Empire—lacking that leader's independence of spirit or his dreams of something beyond that legislature he would have accepted with a proud gesture, as concessions but not the final ones—that hope which had drawn even the Fenians to his side. The political atmosphere of Ireland was black with realist muck and chicanery—" without a vision the people perished."

But new forces were astir beneath it all. Early Gaelic League propagandists with zeal battered popular apathy, and a beam of old-world chivalry lighted the darkness. Literary societies and short-lived monthly journals vaguely inspired by the ideals of Thomas Davis, the Republican traditions of 1798 and 1848, arose. Arthur Griffith, William Rooney,

* " Erin's Hope," Introduction.

† Early Socialist propaganda in Cork attracted the attention of Terence MacSwiney, then thinking out principles of freedom to some purpose. Never a Socialist avowedly, he once, angered by rules irksome to others, went home till his employers sent for him. An early play deals with Cork housing conditions.

W. B. Yeats, and James Connolly in the Celtic Literary Society held many informal and friendly discussions. In Belfast Miss Alice Milligan published the *Shan Van Vocht* (*An t-Sean Bhean Bhocht*). Ninety-eight clubs were formed to arouse interest in Irish Separatist traditions and fittingly commemorate the Centenary of the Rebellion of 1798. In Mr. Griffith's *United Irishman* these vague movements found a more concentrated expression when it was founded in 1899.

But the early days of the Irish Socialist Republican Party were days of darkness for all the promise behind the gloom. "Home Rule" was regarded as the cure for all ills. To dispel this right James Connolly and his comrades went forth with the zeal of crusaders, with all the magnetic passion of religious fervour, a small and somewhat doctrinaire minority, withal not without influence upon Labour and political movements as the years passed. John Mitchel and Karl Marx taken neat, bouquets for politicians and a millennium for the multitude, every Sunday evening outdoors in summer, inside in winter, in Forster Place, near the Bank of Ireland, or a small room in Abbey Street, nearby.

The programme of the Irish Socialist Republican Party was drafted by Connolly and declared as follows: "The establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic, based upon the public ownership by the people of Ireland of the land and instruments of production, distribution, and exchange. Agriculture to be administered as a public function under boards of management elected by the agricultural population, and responsible to them and to the nation at large. All other forms of labour necessary to the well-being of the community to be conducted on the same principles.

"As a means of organising the forces of democracy in preparation of any struggle which may precede its realisation, of paving the way for the realisation of our ideal, of restricting the tide of emigration by providing employment at home, and finally of palliating the present social system, we work by political means to secure the following measures:

"(1) Nationalisation of canals and railways.

"(2) Abolition of private banks and money-lending insti-

tutions, and establishment of State banks under popularly elected boards of directors, issuing loans at cost.

" (3) Establishment at public expense of rural depots for the most improved agricultural machinery, to be lent out to the agricultural population at a rent covering cost and management alone.

" (4) Graduated income tax on all incomes over £400 per annum, in order to provide funds for pensions to the aged, infirm widows, and orphans.

" (5) Legislative restriction of hours of labour to 48 per week and establishment of a minimum wage.

" (6) Free maintenance of all children.

" (7) Gradual extension of the principle of public ownership and supply to all the necessaries of life.

" (8) Public control and management of the national schools by boards elected by popular ballot for that purpose alone.

" (9) Free education up to the highest University degree.

" (10) Universal suffrage."

Connolly, in a note to an American edition of " Erin's Hope : The End and the Means " years afterwards, points out that the several adaptations of the collectivist principle in the 1896 programme such as popular banks, agricultural depôts were subsequently adopted in part, upon co-operative lines, by the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. " They are now," he adds, " omitted, not because of their impracticability, but because they do not come so directly within the scope of Socialist propaganda, and principally because the rapid development of the trust system on international lines, with its control of food carrying trade tends to render nugatory the value of such efforts at this late hour." Despite their rigid Marxism one must note these earlier Socialists had some eye for Irish realities. Years later Connolly * paid a less qualified tribute to the co-operative departure of Sir Horace Plunkett and his friends.

In a preface to an American edition of " Erin's Hope' James Connolly tells us of the fortunes of the first Irish

* " Reconquest of Ireland," Chap. VIII.

Socialists, and gives his enthusiastic views of the change they effected in the nation's political life.

"It is no exaggeration," he wrote, "to say that this organisation and its policy completely revolutionised advanced politics in Ireland. When it was first initiated the word 'republic' was looked upon as a word to be only whispered among intimates; the Socialists boldly advised the driving from political life of all who would not openly accept it. The thought of revolution was the exclusive possession of a few remnants of the secret societies of a past generation, and was never mentioned by them except with heads close together and eyes fearfully glancing round. The Socialists broke through this ridiculous secrecy, and in hundreds of speeches in the most public places of the metropolis, as well as in scores of thousands of pieces of literature scattered through the country, announced their purpose to muster all the forces of labour for a revolutionary reconstruction of society.

"The Socialists of Dublin conceived of and organised the Great Jubilee Protest of 1897, which startled the world and shattered all the elaborate efforts of the British Government to represent Ireland as 'loyal.' They held the first meeting of protest against the Boer War, and at that meeting over 2,000 persons in College Green passed the first resolution calling upon the Irish in the Transvaal to take up arms against the armies of the British capitalist Government; they conducted the first campaign against enlistment in the army; they were the first to contest elections upon a platform openly declaring for a revolution, and they were the first to point out all the immense ameliorations of the conditions of life in Ireland, which could be realised without waiting for Home Rule. In short, the I.S.R.P. has to itself the credit of having opened up practically all the new fields of thought and action, now being exploited by other and less revolutionary organisations."

Upon many pamphlet covers Connolly's message to the country was inscribed, stating that the organisation stood for an Irish Republic, abolition of landlordism and wage-

slavery, co-operative organisation of Labour under Irish representative bodies.

Fintan Lalor, Mitchel and Tone, as well as the writings of the United Irishmen were largely drawn upon by Connolly in his propaganda. In November, 1896, he reprinted with an introduction Lalor's " Rights of Ireland," " The Faith of a Felon," and beyond all doubt did much to rescue Lalor's memory from neglect; as well as insisting upon the great '48 man's social views, then too little heeded. In March, 1897, " Erin's Hope " appeared, a series of four reprints from *The Shan Van Vocht* and the *Labour Leader* in which, besides a plea to use parliamentary methods for ultimate revolutionary ends, he developed his argument of the essentially social character of the national struggle against England, basing his contention upon the historical grounds, now familiar to readers of " Labour in Irish History," that that struggle was one not between two rival legislatures but between two rival systems of society: clan-ownership and feudalism. Towards the end of the same year " '98 Readings " appeared. These sixteen-page fortnightly pamphlets ran to five numbers in all—a fire in the printers' and lack of funds leading to their cessation.

The " '98 Readings " were described as " a series of reprints of the most important literature current in Ireland 100 years ago, including the chief official documents of the United Irishmen, and their writings in prose and verse." No comment was attached, although Connolly in a humorous and characteristic foreword disclaimed any ambition of being an impartial historian. A heading, " Truth, Freedom, Justice," expressed the implied propaganda. Connolly strove to make clear how deeply the ideas of the French Revolution had affected Tone and his comrades.

As a public speaker and agitator, the anti-Jubilee demonstration of June, 1897, afforded Connolly an opportunity which he used to the utmost. Ten thousand copies of his trenchant manifesto were scattered broadcast.

" During this glorious reign," runs part of it, " Ireland has seen 1,225,000 of her children die of famine; starved

to death whilst the produce of her soil and of their labour was eaten up by a vulture aristocracy—enforcing their rents by the bayonets of a hired assassin army in the pay of the 'best of the English Queens'; the eviction of 3,668,000; a multitude greater than that of the entire population of Switzerland; and the reluctant emigration of 4,186,000 of our kindred, a greater host than the entire people of Greece.

"At the present moment 78 per cent. of our wage earners receive less than £1 per week, our streets are thronged by starving crowds of the unemployed, cattle graze on our tenantless farms and around the ruins of our battered homesteads, our ports are crowded with departing emigrants, and our workhouses are full of paupers. Such are the constituent elements out of which we are bade to construct a National Festival of Rejoicing!"

In a powerful paragraph are further outlined both the author's opinion of contemporary conditions and the aims and methods of his movement. He calls upon the workers to depend no longer upon other classes and parties, but to agitate, educate and organise.

The occasion was turned into one of those imposing popular demonstrations dear to Connolly. A public meeting was held in College Green the evening preceding the official celebration. Thousands of workers listened to impassioned denunciations of the projected public parade of "loyalty." Violent scuffles followed the attempts of students from Trinity College—then as ever the headquarters of ascendancy and snobbery in Ireland—to wreck the meeting. Many free fights were soon in progress. Police protection of the interrupters did not prevent the populace from drubbing them soundly. Impassioned speeches were delivered by James Connolly, Miss Maud Gonne (now Madame Gonne MacBride) and other speakers. Next evening a huge procession paraded the city headed by Connolly. A coffin, entitled "The British Empire," and twelve huge black flags setting forth the benefits of Queen Victoria's reign for the common people were also borne along in triumph. Over

30,000 citizens held the streets in a thoroughly orderly fashion. The British Government's efforts to represent Ireland as " loyal " and contented were blown sky-high by this determined protest.

Eventually savage baton charges by the police broke up the procession. Torches were torn from the hands of the demonstrators and dashed in their faces. Enraged by the brutal batonings the citizens smashed the windows of every shop in the centre of Dublin which displayed " loyalist " flags and decorations. An official estimate placed the damage at £1,500.

The Unionist *Daily Express* remarked acidly and sorrowfully : " Nor can it be supposed that the Dublin corner boy is so well informed on the subject of the British Empire as to take any intelligent pleasure in playing at attending its funeral. The designers of the treasonable exhibition cannot have been mere street rowdies, and the deliberate insult to loyalty smacks of some perverted form of education."

Connolly invited the authorities to arrest him if they wished. Arrests of persons who had taken no official part in the demonstration had been numerous. The reply was solemnly to return to Connolly instruments seized by the guardians of law and order at the head of the procession.

During the Boer War he had similar experiences, and was arrested and fined for attempting to address a proclaimed meeting. During Queen Victoria's visit to Ireland in 1900 he was equally to the fore.

" Monarchy," runs a trenchant I.S.R.P. manifesto of his, " is a survival of the tyranny imposed by the hand of greed and treachery upon the human race in the darkest and most ignorant days of our history. It derives its only sanction from the sword of the marauder, and the helplessness of the producer, and its gifts to humanity are unknown save as they can be measured in the pernicious examples of triumphant and shameless iniquities. . . . The future of the working class requires that all political and social positions should be open to all men and women ; that all privileges of wealth be abolished, and that every man or woman born

into this land should have an equal opportunity to attain to the proudest position in the land."

" The Socialist demands that the only birthright necessary to qualify for public office should be the birthright of our common humanity. Believing as we do that there is nothing on earth more sacred than humanity, we deny all allegiance to this institution of royalty. . . . The mind accustomed to political kings can easily be reconciled to social kings—capitalist kings of the workshop, the mill, the railway, the ship and the docks ! "

" Thus coronation and king's visits are made by our astute, never-sleeping masters into huge Imperialist propaganda campaigns in favour of social and political schemes against democracy ! . . . So, we rebels against their rule, must never sleep in our appeal to our fellows to maintain as publicly as possible our belief in the dignity of our class—in the ultimate sovereignty of those who labour ! "

An article in *The Shan Van Vocht*, a monthly Republican magazine, edited by Miss Alice Milligan, entitled " Can Irish Republicans be Politicians ? " is first among his writings in order of time. The affirmative with which he answers the question * proves that little as he exaggerated the utility of political institutions he was never an anti-parliamentarian or Sinn Feiner in the sense of abstention from parliamentary action. Contemptuous as he was of the Home Rule politicians, he never committed himself to the policy of abstention from Westminster.

Reference to his writings early and late will prove that he relied mainly upon the industrial weapon to realise his ideal, that physical force never obsessed him as an end in itself, although he never shirked an appeal to " the arbitrament of the sword " when all else had failed.† Even after the Irish Volunteers' split his advice was that Redmondism should be countered by an agitation for the repeal of those sections of the Home Rule Act which denied to Ireland the status

* See also Chap. IV., The Labour Leader.

† Connolly uses the phrase quoted in an article in *L'Irelande Libre*, 1897 (Journal of the Irish Colony in Paris).

and rights possessed by Australia and Canada. To understand his motive for these apparently contradictory policies it is only necessary to recall his dictum that the true revolutionary must always summon to his aid the entire forces of discontent, political, social and spiritual.

In the article just referred to he declares that the " Irish question " cannot be narrowed to a claim for fuller control over Irish internal administration with the seat of government located at Westminster. Revolution alone succeeded with the moral support of the people, as the failures of the armed uprising of the nineteenth century proved. Political action, however, should be used to spread the republican ideal, to gauge the strength of its support in the country, and to throw its opponents on the defensive by raising the republican issue at local and parliamentary elections alike. Nor, he added, could such a movement be suppressed while representative government remained. In the actual circumstances of the time Connolly was strangely prophetic. His friend, Arthur Griffith, was brooding over similar dreams and means, dreamings one day destined to be historic in the phrase and methods : *Sinn Fein.*

We have heard lately that James Connolly was an interested trade unionist of fiery tendencies who was ignorant of Mitchel's writings, and presumably of Irish history in general, until his return from the United States in 1910 ! As a fact, the files of the *Workers' Republic* in this early period and his " '98 Readings " in 1897, are an eloquent proof of Connolly's long hours in the National Library, and his gleanings from the files of Mitchel's *United Irishmen*, of studies of the literature of Emmet and the United Irishmen, *The Irish People*, and *Irish Felon*, with Irish history and revolutionary lore in general. Already in 1898 the opening chapters of " Labour in Irish History " had seen the light, that strangely burning and sincere book, which may well serve as Connolly's testament.

Critics of note have paid tribute to its scientific spirit, its stressing of the economic factor long neglected, its amazing knowledge of unsuspected aspects romanticists had shunned

or suppressed. Written in haste, under different circumstances in a crowded life, by a man who had to struggle hard to win his daily bread, " Labour in Irish History " is a work of genius when the last leisured professor and acute critic has explained its obvious one-sidedness, its errors, omissions and defects. Lalor's social teachings, William Thompson, the first Irish Socialist, Ralahine, that co-operative Utopia in Clare, the United Irishmen as democrats and internationalists, such Irish pioneers as Feargus O'Connor, and James Bronterre O'Brien and John Doherty in social democratic movements in Great Britain—it is largely due to Connolly's industry and eloquent tenacity that these are growing commonplaces with us to-day. His, too, the merit that the very words " Labour in Irish History " have a very definite meaning and appeal.

The Irish Socialist he held was the best patriot, but he must first learn to look inward upon Ireland for his justification, rest his arguments upon the facts of Irish history and be champion against the subjection of Ireland and all it implies. Connolly indicted Nationalist, Unionist and Republican politician, equally for their deliberate neglect of the social question in past and present alike. Whether as ally or hostile critic he always stood alone, and it can be averred truly that no cause or movement with which he came in contact but received the impress of his vigorous and distinctive outlook. For playful ferocity and impassioned rhetoric, backed by a fact for every adjective, he foreshadows many a trenchant outburst of Trotsky.

Certainly Connolly never accepted the Fabian or evolutionary school of Socialism wholeheartedly, while welcoming the increase of State and municipal enterprise as a sign of the dispensability of the capitalist.* " *Socialism,*" we find him writing, " *implies co-operative control by the workers of the machinery of production ; in the absence of such control we have nought but State capitalism as the Post Office is at present. Socialism is the ownership by the State of all the land and*

* *Workers' Republic,* June 10th, 1899.

materials for labour, combined with the co-operative control by the workers of such land and materials."

We must note how clearly he links his Nationalist aspirations with his social ones in 1898 in the first number of the *Workers' Republic*. " We are Socialists," he tells his readers, " because we see in Socialism not only the modern application of the social principle which underlay the Brehon laws of our ancestors, but because we recognise in it the only principle by which the working class can in their turn emerge in the divinity of FREEMEN, with the right to live as men and not as mere profit-making machines for the service of others. *We are Republicans because we are Socialists*, and therefore enemies to all privileges; *and because we would have the Irish people complete masters of their own destinies, nationally and internationally, fully competent to work out their own salvation.*" And in 1900 Connolly's position was recognised by the International Socialist Congress when his party's delegates were allowed to take their seats as delegates of a nation distinct from Great Britain.

The remaining facts in his career before his departure to America in 1903 may be told in brief. The *Workers' Republic* continued to appear under his editorship with occasional suspensions until May, 1903. It had reappeared in May, 1899, as a halfpenny weekly; upon the close of its career eighty-five numbers had appeared in all. He took an active part in the electoral activities of the I.S.R.P. Five municipal elections were contested with characteristic energy. In 1899 Mr. W. E. Stewart was nominated for the North Dock Ward. Connolly himself stood for the Wood Quay Ward, Dublin, in 1902 and 1903. His candidature was endorsed by the Trades Council, on which he represented the United Labourers for a short period. His opponents were United Irish League nominees, backed in force by the clergy and M.P.'s. In these two hard-fought elections Connolly pursued with vehemence and fire his methods of broadcast propaganda manifestoes and street meetings.

In the summers of 1901 and 1902 he visited England and

Scotland on lecture tours. He also spent four months in the United States, lecturing under the auspices of the American Socialist Labour Party. Connolly was at the time very closely in touch with the Scottish branches of the Social Democratic Federation.* When these bodies seceded from their organisation and formed the Socialist Labour Party James Connolly was chosen to preside over their first conference. In September, 1903, he emigrated to America. His old comrades of the I.S.R.P. gave him an epic farewell banquet.

Connolly, in later years, remarked cynically that he had made two grave mistakes in his life, first in going to America, and second in returning therefrom. But it was in that great Western Republic he really found himself and completed that spiritual development, the high gods of destiny had decreed should leave an indelible mark upon the nation he loved so well—true citizen of the world as he was through all his days.

* It is of interest to note that Connolly urged his British comrades to enter Westminster as a political party and to ignore theoretical scruples aroused by the oath of allegiance.

CHAPTER III

AMERICA—AND AFTER

The robbers made our fathers slaves, then chained them to the soil,
For a little longer chain—a wage—we must exchange our toil.
But open force gives way to fraud, and force again behind
Prepares to strike if fraud should fail to keep man deaf and blind.
Our mothers see their children's limbs they fondled as they grew,
And doted on, caught up to make for rich men profits new.
Whilst strong men die for lack of work, and cries of misery swell,
And women's souls in cities' streets creep shuddering to hell.
These things belong not to the past, but to the present day,
And they shall last till in our wrath we sweep them all away.*

Yes, in that great Western Republic James Connolly really found himself. From his first arrival in the United States until his return to Ireland in 1910, he spent the up and down life of the Socialist agitator. Daniel De Leon, editor of the *Weekly People* and *Daily People*—organs owned and published by the Socialist Labour Party in New York—a thin, grey-haired, impetuous, dictatorial pioneer of industrial unionism in the States, had considerable influence upon Connolly's earlier ideas. This Hebrew forerunner of Lenin, with his theory that representation should follow industrial rather than geographical areas, was the magnet which drew the Irish apostle of the Soviet idea to New York. Upon his arrival he joined De Leon's party, and was afterwards elected a member of the National Executive. His outward activities may be briefly dismissed. Domiciled mostly in

* "The Legacy," by James Connolly.

New York, Connolly yet travelled from end to end of the American continent, with a flying visit to Mexico where he witnessed street fighting, winning high praise and golden opinions as an orator and exponent of his political and economic creed. He worked at such varied occupations as linotype operator, machinist, insurance agent and manager.

Eventually Connolly and De Leon quarrelled, and the former's " Wages, Marriage and the Church," published in the *Weekly People*, gave rise to a hot personal controversy which ended Connolly's association with the Socialist Labour Party in April, 1908. Before leaving, Connolly was denounced as " an agent of the Jesuits ! " He joined the Socialist Party of America, was appointed national organiser and toured in that capacity from May, 1909, to June, 1910. For a space, in New York City, he was organiser for the Industrial Workers of the World. His persuasiveness and fluency in several languages stood him in good stead. In long railway journeys Connolly literally devoured libraries, and his mind grew more matured while his expression of his views grew ever more mellow and convincing. Yet wistfully betimes his thoughts turned to Ireland, weary of American life and manners, justifying the accusation of a stern Marxist critic that here was an Irishman, drunk deep in Socialist philosophy, with a curious Nationalist kink in him. The words of his " The Call of Erin " at this period re-echo his mood :

Glorious is the land we're leaving
And its pride shall grow with years,
And the land that calls us homeward
Can but share with us her tears.
Yet our heart her call obeying
Heedless of the wealth men crave,
Turneth home to share her sorrow,
Where she weeps beside the wave.

She is calling, she is calling in the wind
And o'er the tide.
We, her children, hear her voices
Call us ever to her side.

Outstanding achievements were the founding of the Irish Socialist Federation, and Connolly's editorship of the *Harp*, monthly organ of the Federation. Too long has James Connolly been known to the mass of his countrymen through his published books and pamphlets. His maturest thoughts and developed convictions lie buried in the scattered files of Labour journals in Ireland, Great Britain and America. In his genial and trenchant manner he expresses in the *Harp* his best criticisms of American society, Irish-American politicians (once described by him as descendants of the serpents St. Patrick banished from Ireland), his complete political and social ideals as well as his practical policy for Irish workers.

The Irish Socialist Federation, the declaration of principles states, was composed " of members of the Irish race organised to assist the revolutionary working-class movement in Ireland by a dissemination of its literature; to educate the working class of this country [U.S.A.] into a knowledge of Socialist principles, and to prepare them to co-operate with the workers of all other races, colours and nationalities in the emancipation of Labour. It affirms its belief that political and social freedom are not two separate and unrelated ideas, but are the two sides of the one great principle, each being incomplete without the other.

" The course of society, politically, has been from warring but democratic tribes, within each nation, to a united government under an absolute undemocratic monarchy. Within this monarchy, again, developed revolts against its power, revolts at first seeking to limit its prerogatives only, then demanding the inclusion of certain classes in the governing power, then demanding the right of the subject to criticise and control the power of the monarch, and finally, in the most advanced countries this movement has culminated in the total abolition of the monarchical institution and the transformation of the subject into the citizen."

" In industry a corresponding development has taken place. . . . In industrial history the culminating point to which all efforts must at last converge lies in the abolition of

the capitalist class and not in the mere restrictions of its power. . . . The Irish Socialist Federation recognises these two phases of human development, pledges its members to fealty to the principles resultant therefrom, politically rejecting the dominion of nation over nation, as of man over man, it in the field of Irish politics is organised against every party recognising British rule in Ireland in any form or manner, in all its moods and modifications, and, *as the final solution of the Irish, as of every other struggle for freedom, it seeks the Workers' Republic : the administration of all the land and all the instruments of Labour as social property in which all shall be co-heirs and owners.*"

Persistently the *Harp* pointed out the harm done to the Socialist cause by Irishmen in that movement often breaking the ties, which had bound them to national organisations—led away by a foolishly sentimental interpretation of the Brotherhood of Man. Connolly insisted, in the *Harp's* first number, that the result was that the Socialist grew to be regarded as one who deserted the weaker side in a fight. The Irish race had to face the calumnies, spread by English sources all over the world. He urged that the Irish Socialist should become the medium for translating his ideals in the terms of Irish thought, remaining in touch with Irish literary, educational, and revolutionary bodies. " We propose to show all members of our fighting race that Socialism will make them better fighters, without being less Irish."

To familiarise his conception of the correct interpretation of Irish history, Connolly completed and issued in serial form " Labour in Irish History." Brilliant and penetrating judgments on Labour matters, Irish-American affairs and the new movements astir in Ireland enlivened his journal's pages. His leading articles, enlightening as regards later views on ideals and methods, have been reprinted in large part in " Socialism Made Easy " and " The Axe to the Root." He denounced craft unionism, and pleaded for less personal polemics and heresy hunting amongst the various Socialist groups. The essential unity of the great Labour movement came home to him. He saw that despite violent surface dis-

agreements, Socialists, Co-operators, Anarchist-Communists, and Syndicalists had many points of agreement; that everywhere great world forces stirred in the most unsuspected places—portents, to a discerning eye, of a coming Change. He perceived, for example, in the famous quarrel between the French anti-militarist Socialists, who advocated a general strike and insurrection to stop a European war as against the German Social Democrats who favoured more peaceful and humdrum preventatives, a fundamental clash between two equally sincere and useful schools of thought—both equally valuable to a common international movement. Connolly warned American Socialists not to pride themselves on a superiority to European patriotic squabbles. If Japan and the United States ever collided! Well, one would see!

Briefly here may be summarised James Connolly's conception of Industrial Unionism. He held that the older trade unionism divided the workers where, above all, they should be united, in their daily toil in field, factory, and workshop. The division must be ended by a union embracing all workers of "hand and brain" in each industry. These industrial unions were to be the main instruments of social revolution; nay, the very structure of the future society.

"The Socialist thinker," he writes, "when he paints the structural form of the new social order, does not imagine an industrial system directed or ruled by a body of men or women, elected from an indiscriminate mass of residents within given districts, said residents working at a heterogeneous collection of trades and industries. . . . What the Socialist does realise is that under a Socialist form of society the administration of affairs will be in the hands of representatives of the various industries of the nation; that the workers in the shops and factories will organise themselves in unions, each union comprising all the workers at a given industry; that said union will democratically control the workshop life of its own industry, electing all foremen, etc., and regulating the routine of Labour in that industry in subordination to the needs of society in general, to the needs

of its allied trades and to the department of industry to which it belongs. That representatives elected from these various departments of industry will meet and form the industrial administration or national government of the country.

" In short, Social Democracy, as its name implies, is the application to industry, or to the social life of the nation, of the fundamental principles of democracy. Such application will necessarily have to begin in the workshop and proceed logically and consecutively upward through all the grades of industrial organisation until it reaches the culminating point of national executive power and direction."* And Connolly, it must be repeated—was never a State Socialist or advocate of Fabian schemes of municipalisation. His conception of Socialism destroyed all fear of the bureaucrat and blended " the fullest democratic control with the most absolute expert supervision, something unthinkable of any society built upon the political state." Absence of this co-operative control by the workers in his view meant State Capitalism.

An appeal from Irish history was, Connolly urged repeatedly, more convincing to those of Irish birth and origin, than unfamiliar parallels and arguments based upon such countries as England and America, while adding that the Land League had pointed lessons for the international Labour movement.

" An Irishman's first impressions," he wrote again, " and his deepest ones, are those of his own race and country, and are the result of the influences which go to mould a man's character, influences pre-natal as well as post-natal. Pre-natal or historical influences comprise all the hereditary elements and experiences of his branch of the human race, and in the case of the Irish Celt have burned into his character and intellectual make-up by the sad experience of a seven hundred years' struggle against tyranny. Such influences are constant and abiding, and *although they may be temporarily smothered or repressed by the vicissitudes of a lifetime they will survive and reassert themselves and form the*

* " Socialism Made Easy."

chief factor in shaping the character of the individual. Post-natal influences are those of our personal, material, tangible environment, and have hitherto been those upon which the Socialist propagandist made his sole reliance in converting the Irish to his faith." *

Upon the question of Socialism and religion Connolly always took, whether in Ireland or America, a most decided stand. He never expressed his views more tersely than this : " Socialism is an industrial and political question ; it is a question that is going to be settled in the workshop and at the ballot boxes of this and every other country, and is not going to be settled at the altar. The education which fits the man for the altar does not give him any mastery over economic knowledge. The priest who has even studied for his priesthood at Rome usually could learn a lot about modern industry from the Irish labourer whose childhood, manhood and old age are spent toiling in workshop, mine, and factory for a starvation wage."†

Upon the question he then stood thus. He would no more dream of describing his Socialism as Christian than he would describe his Nationalism as Christian. He condemned clerical interference in secular affairs as much as he condemned the blatant anti-religious propagandists who were only too prevalent in the Socialist movement in the States.

He was quite as severe upon the latter as upon the ecclesiastics who incurred his wrath, declaring that he preferred " a devout and holy working man " any day, deeming him a more reliable ally than those free-thinking fanatics who, still immersed in the literature of the French Revolution, regarded priestcraft as the explanation of the origin of religion. To quote his own phrase, one could always rely upon him " to borrow a pair of hob-nailed boots to dance on these blatant and perfervid free-thinkers."

" Scribblers who disgrace the Socialist ranks with their dogmatisms," " blatant and rude atheism," " crudely superficial thinkers," are phrases he uses in the *Harp*.

* *Harp*, July, 1908.
† *Ibid.*, October, 1908.

Among the reasons for his break with De Leon was the religious question, and his objection to the publication of Bebel's book, "Woman," by the American S.L.P.—actions and sentiments, suggestive of the sincerity of his final reconciliation with the Catholic Church.

Worth passing mention in this connection is his view on the marriage question. In his reply to De Leon, Connolly stated that he believed in monogamic marriage, and disagreed with Bebel who had taught otherwise. Describing the German Socialist's book as "too prurient" to do any good as a propagandist work, though containing valuable propagandist material, he continues: "I personally reject every attempt, no matter by whom made, to identify Socialism with anything of marriage or sexual relations. I believe that, no matter what may have been the force which gave birth to the institution, its permanency will and must be tested not by its origin, but by its adaptability to the economic institutions of the future." It is, of course, but fair to state that De Leon was no advocate of Free Love, and that the clash was really due to his somewhat dictatorial personality. Leader-worship, Connolly abhorred. "Teach them, O Lord!" he would quote from some French writer, "that in the heaven of Liberty there are neither leaders nor great men." In "Labour, Nationality and Religion," Connolly afterwards vehemently and ably defended the Socialist movement in general, and Bebel in particular, from the usual charges in this connection, declaring that the tidal wave of immorality under present conditions was due largely to economic causes.

Squabbles in the Socialist and Labour ranks he regarded as a sign of individuality which should allay all fears of a bureaucratic *régime* or servile State in a Socialistic community built on industrial unions.

More and more James Connolly longed to return to Ireland where new intellectual, social and political movements were sweeping the land. Eventually, after communications with friends at home, notably with his old comrade, William O'Brien, who since has played a large part in

reorganising the Irish trade union world after the collapse of 1916, he was invited to Ireland to lecture in various centres for the Socialist Party of Ireland. Before his return the *Harp* was transferred to Ireland, where it was printed in the *Irish Nation* office, in January, 1910, under Jim Larkin's lively sub-editorship; *his* first leading article brought a threat of five libel actions. But five months later, Connolly set out across the Atlantic, the call of Ireland in his ears:

> Oh! ye waters bear us onward
> And ye winds your task fulfil,
> Till our Irish eyes we feast on
> Irish vale and Irish hill;
> Till we tread our Irish cities,
> See their glory and their shame,
> And our eyes like skies o'er Erin
> Through their smiles shed tears of pain.

In various articles published before his return, James Connolly urged a new policy upon Irish Labour. While he still retained his earlier views, he had come to believe theoretical clearness was of less importance than the aroused class instincts and consciousness of the mass of the workers. He was prepared, he said, to co-operate with all who helped in Labour's industrial and political organisations, even when their aims fell far short of his. After the inculcation of Socialist principles, he declared, the more pressing duty for Irish Socialists was the organisation of Labour as a coherent whole under one direction and in one association.

He emphasised the class-consciousness of the Irish workers despite the meagreness theoretically of Socialist principles, recalling how Labour electoral associations had come into existence all over the country, after the passing of the Local Government Act of 1898, despite John Redmond's denunciations and appeals. In brief, he was convinced that elements were at hand for a forward move.

In those far-off days he foreshadowed what he, Larkin, Thomas Johnson, Thomas Foran, and the Irish Labour

movement have, in large measure, since accomplished. He sketched a scheme in which Irish workers would organise as sub-divisions of one great whole, an organisation of all who worked for wages into one body, national in scope and dimensions, elected by one vote of all the unions, and directing the power of such unions in any needed direction. He declared this would create a power as dominant as the Land League, enable Labour to dictate terms and settle all the questions which had been the stock-in-trade of quack politicians for fifty years previously.

For instance, the question of Irish manufacture could be settled by Labour, thus organised, refusing to handle all goods whose sale or use in Ireland tended to deprive Irish men or women of a chance of earning their living in Ireland. He did not believe that the workers could control national industries, if those industries had their location for manufacturing purposes in another country.

The Socialist Party of Ireland (Cumannacht na h-Eireann) was at the time a very energetic and enthusiastic body. For some years before Connolly's arrival in July, 1910, an active propaganda had been carried on, differences as to doctrines and methods had been reconciled, and Socialist literature spread broadcast through the country. In the columns of the *Peasant* and *Irish Nation*, edited by W. P. Ryan, members and sympathisers and critics of the party had won more attention for its ideals, affording an open platform for the rising Labour movement, championing Larkin in his efforts to organise unskilled labour in Belfast, Cork and Dublin, from 1907 onwards, on an independent Irish basis.

The *Harp*, upon its appearance, and a series of interesting Sunday evening lectures in the Antient Concert Rooms by, among others, Fred Ryan, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, Walter Carpenter, R. J. Mortished, W. P. Ryan, Seamus O'Pice, Thomas Lyng and J. H. Cousins, had helped to create a lively propaganda centre when Connolly's reappearance created a profound impression. His "Labour in Irish History" and "Labour, Nationality and Religion"—a

trenchant reply to a series of anti-Socialist sermons a well-known Jesuit had delivered in Dublin, appeared the same year. Connolly, now the regular S.P.I. organiser, attracted huge audiences outdoors and indoors, in Cork and Belfast, where small branches of the S.P.I. already flourished, at Cobh and elsewhere. His listeners were invariably astonished by his deliberation, humour, balance and eloquence, his quick repartee, his own original outlook. As ever he routed hecklers and tied Nationalist doctrinaires in knots. Eloquently he pleaded that, the more action in political and industrial spheres was adopted, the more rapidly would the Labour and Socialist movements in the country advance.

"Labour, Nationality and Religion" perhaps best expresses Connolly as the trenchant, well-informed propagandist, aflame with a definite social and democratic gospel, lighted by enthusiasm, humour and years of varied studies and experiences, abreast of every new development and thought in similar movements in all lands. The last pamphlet is also, of course, a reasoned statement of the author's views upon the then burning topic of clerical interference in the political and economic sphere.

A controversy in the *Catholic Times* (October 18th, November 8th, 18th, and 22nd, 1912), was originated by an attack by the Rev. Fr. MacErlean, S.J. upon the pamphlet, and throws further light upon Connolly's views upon the subject of clericalism in political life. The reverend controversialist, excellent and beyond reproach as an editor of Irish poetry text-books, was decidedly weak in controversy with so formidable an antagonist.

"Spreading himself," to quote Connolly upon a quotation from a Judge Maguire, with a quasi-historical disquisition upon the Vatican in Irish history, and the usual cheap sneers at Socialism common to the Catholic Press, trying, moreover, to prejudice the issue by the insinuation that the views of a *Daily Herald* reviewer of the pamphlet were necessarily those of the author.

Connolly's statement of his main positions alone are of

interest to us to-day. Thus* : " First as an Irish Nationalist, and latterly as a Socialist, I have always accepted and understood the doctrine so well expressed by Fr. MacErlean that the Holy See must always acknowledge the *de facto* Government in any country without examining or deciding the question of its rightful title. But the considerations which compel the Holy See, as such, to recognise the *de facto* government and the *de facto* social order are not binding upon individual Catholics, and we, therefore, retain to the full all our rights and prerogatives as citizens and workers for social betterment, without abating necessarily one jot of our Catholicity.

" As individual Catholics, we claim it as our right, nay, as our duty, to refuse allegiance to any power or social system whose authority to rule over us we believe to be grounded upon injustice."

In a further issue, Connolly continues†: "I admit unquestioningly the obligation resting upon the Holy See to recognise the *de facto* government and the *de facto* social order in any given country or age. But side by side with part and parcel of that admission, and not to be divorced from it, I insist upon the right of the individual Catholic to disregard that obligation and to be a reformer of or rebel and reformist against the government which the Holy See is compelled by its international position to recognise.

" Without this right Catholicity would be synonymous with the blankest reaction and opposition to all reform. As an example Ireland is illuminating. For the greater part of seven centuries the *de facto* government of Ireland has been a foreign government imposed upon the country by force, and maintained by the same means. The Holy See was compelled by its position to recognise that government, but the holiest and deepest feelings of the Catholics of Ireland were in rebellion against that government, and in every generation the scaffold and the prison and the martyrs' grave have been filled in Ireland with devout subjects of the Holy See,

* *Catholic Times*, November 8th, 1912.
† *Ibid.*, November 22nd, 1912.

but with unrelenting enemies of the *de facto* government of Ireland. The firm distinction in the minds of Irish Catholics between the *duties* of the Holy See and the *rights* of the individual Catholics has been a necessary and saving element in keeping Ireland Catholic, and he, by whatever name he calls himself or to whatever order he belongs who would seek to destroy that distinction, or make acquiescence in the political obligations of the Papacy, a cardinal article of Catholic faith is an enemy of the faith and liberties of our people."

At a somewhat later stage Connolly dealt more fully with this aspect of his ideals. Under the auspices of the Dublin Trades Council, Rev. Fr. Laurence, O.F.S.C., delivered a lecture on "Ireland's Opportunities," January 25th, 1915. Thomas Farren, then president of the council, presided. Connolly was among the speakers who followed, and his comments in his *Workers' Republic* the week following are noteworthy in that he found himself in substantial agreement with the disciple of St. Francis.

"Perhaps, nowhere in Europe," Connolly wrote,* "could working men and women, overwhelmingly Catholic in their religious faith, so gather together and discuss their national aspirations with a priest warmly esteemed, but insisting on discussing their problems in the spirit of comradeship and equality. Nights of similar character are the greatest barrier to the growth of French anti-clericalism in Ireland, a sign of the times that the lesson of France has not been lost, that the Church recognises that if she does not move with the people, the people will move without her.

"It is generally recognised that the editor of this paper, represents the most militant, and, what is called, the most extreme type of the Labour movement. We are glad, therefore, to be able to say, in all sincerity, that we could see no fundamental difference between the views expressed by Fr. Laurence, and those views we ourselves hold, and never hesitate to express. The differences were, apparently, differences of definition. The reverend lecturer called things

* *Workers' Republic*, January 29th, 1915.

by certain names, we would use different names, but, in essence, the things were identical.

" We both endorsed the principle embodying the things whose names we could not agree upon. For that reason we, on our part being more anxious for satisfactory results than for correct definitions, would not press to contention the seeming points of difference.

" To be brief, here is our position, as we have defined it, in the name of the Irish Labour movement. We accept the family as the true type of human society. We say that in that family the resources of the entire household are at the service of each, as in the family the strong does not prey upon or oppress the weak, as in the family the least gifted mentally, and the weakest physically, share equally the common store of all with the most gifted and physically strongest, as in the family the true economy consists in utilising and conserving the heritage of all for the good of all, so in like manner the nation should act and be administered. Every man, woman and child of the nation must be considered as an heir of all the property of the nation, and the entire resources of the nation should stand behind each individual, guaranteeing them from want, and multiplying their individual powers, with all the powers of the organised nation.

" To attain that end, we seek to organise every person who works for wages, that the workers themselves may determine the conditions of labour. We hold that the sympathetic strike is the affirmation of the Christian principle that we are all members of one another, whilst those who oppose the sympathetic strike and uphold sectionalism in trade union struggles are repeating the question of Cain, who, when questioned about the brother he had murdered, asked, ' Am I my brother's keeper ? ' We say ' Yes, we are all keepers of our brothers and sisters and responsible for them.'

" From the organisation of Labour as such, we propose to organise, upon the co-operative principle, that we may control the commodities we ourselves use and consume.

Upon such a basis we can build a true demand for Irish-made goods, from which all elements of sweating have been removed.

"Recognising that the proper utilisation of the nation's energies requires control of political power, we propose to conquer that political power through a working-class political party, and recognising that the full development of national powers requires complete national freedom, we are frankly and unreservedly prepared for whatever struggle may be necessary to conquer for Ireland her place among the nations of the earth. That is the programme of the militant Irish Labour movement. We are rejoiced to find amongst the clergy so many whose hearts also throb responsive to those ideals."

In 1911 Connolly went to live in Belfast, where in the July of that year he was appointed Secretary and Ulster District Organiser of the Irish Transport Workers' Union. It is now necessary to retrace our steps and to consider more fully his methods, ideals and triumphs as a Labour leader.

CHAPTER IV

THE LABOUR LEADER

"IRELAND as distinct from her people is nothing to me; and the man who is bubbling over with love and enthusiasm for 'Ireland' and can yet pass unmoved through our streets and witness all the wrong and the suffering, the shame and the degradation wrought upon the people of Ireland—aye, wrought by Irishmen upon Irish men and women, without burning to end it, is, in my opinion, a fraud and a liar in his heart, no matter how he loves that combination of chemical elements he is pleased to call 'Ireland.'" *

After his return from America James Connolly emerged definitely as a Labour leader. His experience as an organiser for the Socialist Labour and Socialist Parties had matured him. Although still holding his Marxian principles he became less a theorist. Indeed, he had grown somewhat weary of the Holy Trinity of Karl Marx, Lewis Morgan and Darwin with their tributary tomes dear to American Labourites. His controversy with De Leon, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the United States, his deeper experience in political campaigning had somewhat disillusioned him. The rigid but human propagandist became the militant and persuasive Labour leader. After the stormy days of the Dublin Strike of 1913, this was generally recognised. Critics talked less of the doctrinaire. Formerly his force of character, his grit, his self-control and executive ability had deeply impressed opponents. But his somewhat arid theorising had repelled and, except for small coteries, had found but little response in the popular consciousness.

Larkin had fanned up the smouldering discontent of the masses, and breathed a new spirit into Irish trade unionism and Labour political bodies in general. Between James

* "The New Evangel."

Connolly and Larkin there was always a latent antagonism, which both men suppressed in the interests of their movement. Jim Larkin had much kindliness of heart, an Elizabethan directness of diction, a love for the poetry of Walt Whitman and Francis Thompson, an immense power of gripping popular audiences. Connolly appealed to the head rather than to the heart, he distrusted every movement which grouped itself round a personality, and where there was dictatorship his instinct was to shoot on sight.

" Larkinism," as a movement, Connolly has judged in measured and thoughtful words.* " Observe that the *Irish Times* declares that Larkinism is a revolt against intolerable conditions, remember that even Mr. William Martin Murphy was moved to tell the Dublin employers that it was their sweating wages and bad conditions that produced Larkinism, remember also that no one can be found to deny that the general effect of Larkinism has been to raise wages and improve conditions, and then consider that all those who admit these things have combined and are combining to down Larkinism, and to represent it as the incarnation of evil and you have a picture of the turmoil caused in our distressful country by the spectacle of the labourer organising and preparing to take his own.

" You have also a typical representation of the antagonism between theory and practice. In theory they admit that conditions were intolerable, and that Larkin was justified in making war upon them ; in practice they unite to defend those conditions, and destroy the man or woman who rebels against them."

From 1911 onwards Connolly gained a stronger grip upon both the Nationalist and Labour movements. Larkin and the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, an awakening of the democratic elements in the Sinn Fein and Republican movements, the Church, the Gaelic League, even in the Irish Parliamentary Party to social issues, the spread of inquiry into wages, housing and economic conditions in general had marked the year of his return. The I.T.G.W.U.

* " Reconquest of Ireland," Chap. IV.

stood forth as the exemplar of industrial action Connolly had so consistently advocated. He struck now two notes : industrial and political action was the road to the emancipation of Irish Labour. He urged unity amongst Irish Socialists, more electoral contests, and less talk.

Connolly struck persistently the Industrial Unionist note. While candidly admitting to his critics the Irish Transport Workers' Union was not the ideally perfect organisation of theoretical dreamers and planners he hailed it as a good beginning, and best suited to Irish circumstances. The Labour movement in Ireland, he told his friends in Britain, would not be built upon theories and philosophies of history. Indeed, he commended to the cry of " less theorising and more fighting " the transport workers for fighting shy of the theory of value and the materialistic conception of history to address themselves rather to the more immediate tasks of the economic struggle.

A materialistic viewpoint, insistence upon things of the body, a want of sympathy with spiritual enthusiasms—even yet these unjust charges are levelled against James Connolly. An absolute misunderstanding of his teachings and a complete ignorance of his writings alone can excuse this. He was a practical idealist inflamed with a holy hatred against the sordid circumstances the canting party politicians of his day greeted as the soil of the ideal and the garden of the soul. If he respected facts and smashed idols he responded to lofty and spiritual ideals as readily as he condemned sacred watchwords on the lips of hypocrites. Even when the gains were measured in terms of " increased self-respect and decreased industrial slavery " alone he prized the industrial weapon. The progress of the nation he ever judged by the progress of its lowest class.

" We of the working class," * he wrote, " have much to be thankful for in the fact that in the upward march in which we are engaged, we are permitted to reap advantages of a material nature at each stage of our journey. If our wages are not increased, our toil lightened, our hours

* *Irish Worker*, Christmas, 1912.

lessened, our conditions improved as a result of the daily conflict we know that it is because of some faltering on the part of ourselves or our fellow workers, some defalcation on the part of some being of our army, and not a necessity or unavoidable part of the conflict itself. . . . The modern Labour movement is suspicious of theorising which shirks conflict and seeks to build up the revolutionary army of social reconstruction by means of an army, that fights and wins concessions whilst it is fighting. Every victory won by Labour for Labour helps to strengthen the cramped soul of the labourer. Every time the labourer, be it man or woman, secures a triumph in the battle for juster conditions the mind of the labourer receives that impulse towards higher things that comes from the knowledge of power. Here and there to some degraded individuals, the victories of Labour mean only increased opportunities for drink and degeneracy, but on the whole, it remains true that the fruits of the victories of the organised working class are as capable of being stated in terms of spiritual uplifting as in the material terms of cash."

The conception Connolly held of the function, end, and machinery of the Industrial Union need not be again dwelt upon, or the relation between his industrial unionist ideas and his subsequent attitude towards the European War or the last adventure. Sufficient it is to emphasise that he hoped in times of peace to achieve his ends peacefully by its powerful means, always proclaiming, however, that he had his doubts whether the social revolution would be accomplished without an appeal to force in some form or other. In all his writings and speeches he is quite clear that he would not shrink from the use of physical force in terms of guns and bombs, if such were needful. He builded great hopes upon the One Big Union to assure social and political peace in Ireland. In the great wave of Labour unrest that swept over Great Britain and Ireland in 1911 he thought he saw the approach of an attack upon capitalist society which would sweep Europe. The Labour movement in these countries, to his mind, reached its highest point of moral

grandeur in the solidarity displayed and outbreaks of sympathetic strikes which marked the early stages of the Dublin Labour upheaval of 1913.

The subsequent failure of the British Labour movement to back the Dublin workers by industrial action sadly disillusioned him, but he never swerved in his Internationalist convictions or his belief that working-class salvation lay in the union of political and industrial activity and amicable and equal relations between all nations and the peoples in all climes. When the International lay in ruins, and the promising army of Labour he had served as private and general alike was dispersed beneath the aggressive banners of European Imperialisms, and his voice seemed a voice in the wilderness, he still believed in the brotherhood of man and the co-operative commonwealth. And even as he prepared feverishly for his last blow he welcomed any voice that upheld his Christ-like conviction—denouncing even Irish jingoism and laughing to scorn the militarist legend of the healing glory of war.

A powerfully Internationalist and Industrial Unionist note dominated all his speeches. A typical instance may be quoted from his address to a mass meeting of workers in Beresford Place, in connection with a lock-out in the Dublin coal trade in July, 1911. As one reads, the memory returns to recall vividly the stolid yet fiery apostle of the Labour evangel, ever idealistic and human, never losing sight of the stars as he battled in the mire of mean streets, nor in the acrid debating rooms of Socialist secretarians, nor yet in capitalists' offices for the welfare of the class he loved, the vision of the future commonwealth shining above many a weary and dreary struggle.

"Now we to-day in this great strike have all learned the lesson of acting together.* Henceforward, when the sailors quit, it will be a sign for the dockers to quit too. And when the dockers quit working it will be a sign for the sailors to walk ashore also. We have seen at Liverpool, recently, how the men on the great liners, having got their

* Quoted in the *Irish Worker*, July 22nd, 1911.

increased wages and recognition of their union, walked ashore because the dockers would not get the same rights as they were looking for. If, therefore, it was good for Englishmen and Scotchmen to fight together, why should it not be good for Irishmen also ? Were we going to be the scabs of the international battlefield at the present time ?

" Well, the I.T.W.U. is here now, and we say that the more Irishmen we are, the more it is our duty to act the part of men in this international struggle of the working class, and, by doing so, we are going to bring this fight to a successful issue. . . . We are fighting primarily for the right to organise. . . . After that we place our rights in regard to wages and hours and conditions of work. But we place this question of the right of organising first, and also that the union must be recognised. By proceeding on these lines we will build up our organisation and get higher wages and better conditions of employment in the future.

" In building up the union, we are raising Ireland up. By means of this organisation the people will be given a better chance of living. They will be given better wages and better housing accommodation, instead of living in slums. In Belfast the workers are not as strong as they are in Dublin, because the old policy of dividing the workers is in progress in Belfast.* In some places in the past it was union against union ; but to-day in Belfast it is religion against religion. But we of the working classes are getting slowly and gradually into our heads that so long as the masters make no distinction as to who they will employ, be they Catholic or Protestant, but are quite ready to get a profit out of them, we will refuse to allow religion to divide us in our unions.

* Connolly always believed the Irish labour movement would eventually rout sectarianism.

" In their movement North and South will again clasp hands, again will it be demonstrated as in '98, that the pressure of a common exploitation can make enthusiastic rebels out of a Protestant working class, earnest champions of civil and religious liberties out of Catholics and out of both a united Social Democracy.—" Labour in Irish History."

" I don't care where a man worships, but I do care where he gets his pay on a Saturday night. I don't care where a man worships, but I do care that he has a man's rights allowed to him, and that he is a man standing along with his fellows in the common battle for the uplifting of the human race."

A vivid description of the miseries and triumphs of the Belfast dockers has been left on record by Connolly in his writings in the *Irish Worker*. He declared that Labour conditions in that port were little short of a chronicle of martyrdom, a veritable example of the evils due to want of organisation. When he arrived first on the scene in 1911 he found the union disrupted after Larkin's departure, while " speeding-up " had demoralised the dockers. Indeed, the general exodus from the union after Jim Larkin's exit had left the men spiritless and powerless. In order to extract the last ounce of energy, Connolly tells us, a system of bonuses had been introduced among the grain labourers. Every gang turning over more than 120 tons received 6*d.* per man. This (100 tons being taken as a daily average) meant that for *one-fifth* of a day's work crowded into the ten hours *one-tenth* of a day's pay was the fruit.

By tips to winchmen, firemen, etc., this was aggravated, the pace was kept up on the unfortunate fillers and carriers by curses, obscene language and even physical violence, along with the ever-present threat of dismissal.

The tallymen and checkers were forbidden to reveal actual tonnages until the day's end. Consequently 160, 180 and 200 tons grew to be regarded as in no way remarkable. One man had to carry this weight on his back from hatch to ship-rail in each gang!

All day long other men toiled in the suffocating hold, bare-footed, half-naked, clothed with dust; while tubs rushed up and down over their heads with such rapidity, that every muscle was strained to breaking point and the feverish recklessness was a perpetual menace to life and limb. Men could not retire for any purpose without paying a substitute. Accidents were common, and rarely could

three days' work be done in succession. Such is Connolly's plain and dispassionate account of the human inferno he promptly proceeded to change. Day in and day out he agitated up and down the docks preaching solidarity until his chance came.

His propaganda was slowly attracting attention, and gradually gathering recruits when it was found that the head line, the Ulster S.S. Co., had refused to pay Belfast seamen the same rate of wages the same firm were paying in the Bristol Channel. Connolly and Bennett, the Secretary of the Seamen and Firemen's Union, at once appealed to the dockers on that boat and all around the docks to come out for the sailors and themselves.

Six hundred men responded before night, and, with financial assistance from Dublin, the strike ended in much improved conditions and a 3*s.* increase. A daily average was also fixed and a blunt intimation given that slave-driving or intimidation would be answered by a strike for the offender's dismissal. Connolly followed up his victory. All round wage increases, abolition of slave-driving, and the complete unionising of labour on foreign-going vessels—that, in brief, was his achievement. Union conditions were enforced for seamen and firemen on all ships coming into the low dock—the result of lightning strikes on, at least, a dozen occasions. In pursuance of Connolly's view that local action should be prompt and unencumbered by awaiting an executive decision, the strike was employed unhesitatingly on all occasions when the principle of solidarity was at stake. The social and intellectual side of the work was not neglected, for extensive premises were secured in Corporation and York Streets. Amongst the ablest of Connolly's lieutenants in these varied activities was Cathal O'Shannon, since editor of the *Voice of Labour*, member of National Executive of the Irish Labour Party, and an Irish representative at the Berne International.

"Direct action" which Connolly relied upon and used at this period had long been studied first-hand by him in its European phase, the Syndicalist movement of the French

C.G.T. and its British imitators, as well as in the industrial unionists and S.L.P. propagandists, or in the I.W.W. in America. His own definition of direct action was " ignoring all the legal and parliamentary ways of obtaining redress for the grievances of Labour and proceeding to rectify those grievances by direct action upon the employers' most susceptible part—his purse." He tells us he regarded direct action as an effective weapon which saved much waste of union funds and needless worry. He did not believe, however, it should be used recklessly or indiscriminately or exclusively But during these days he employed it pretty much as we have seen in the case of the grain men. He used it in general to improve conditions and humanise the slave-driven mills and workshops of Belfast.

Connolly relates * a salient example of his militant methods as exemplified in a Belfast mill strike. The Ulster manufacturers had agreed to curtail their output by 15 per cent. Accordingly the mills were put on short time. Individual manufacturers proceeded to " speed up " production—a violation of the agreement which curtailed wages rather than output. At this opportune moment new rules were introduced and fines inflicted on flimsy pretexts for laughing, talking, or fixing the hair, while instant dismissal followed the introduction into the mill of newspapers, darning needles, or sweets. " The whole atmosphere of the mill," Connolly wrote, " was an atmosphere of slavery. The workers were harassed by petty bosses, mulcted in fines for the most trivial offences, and robbed and cheated in the most systematic manner. If a spinner whose weekly wages averaged 11*s.* 3*d.* lost a day's work, stayed out a day, she was fined 2*s.* 7*d.*, a sum out of all proportion to her daily earnings. The same was true of the half-timers and the doppers—little children." Connolly decided he could " speed up " too, and an inevitable strike followed. Over 1,100 women and girls quitted work in various departments, appealing to Connolly to act as organiser in the absence of other trade union help or en-

* *Irish Worker*, October 28th, 1911.

couragement. Employers replied by a lock-out threat. The defiant spinners refused to listen to the arguments of Miss Mary Galway, Textile Operatives' Society, and Mr. Gregg of the Amalgamated Union of Labour, who arrived at the factory gates on the day the lock-out was announced to begin.

Threats and appeals to return to work were rejected by the enthusiastic strikers who cheered Connolly and placed themselves under his leadership. The Press tried misrepresentation and boycott to alienate public opinion, but in vain. " The girls fought heroically. We held a meeting in St. Mary's Hall and packed it with 3,000 girls and women. They were packed from floor to ceiling, squatting on the floor between the platform and the seats—3,000 cheering, singing, enthusiastic females, and not a hat among them. The following resolution was passed unanimously : ' Resolved : That this mass meeting of mill-workers welcome the establishment in this city of a textile branch of the I.T. and General Workers' Union, and that we pledge it our unfailing and undivided support ; and that we condemn as a disgrace to our civilisation the conditions sought to be imposed upon us by the mill-owners and heartily endorse the strike in the mills and recommend the strikers to the sympathy and support of the Belfast public.' "

Processions and street meetings met with much public support, but the collections only amounted to £87, while strike pay of 2*s*. a day alone was forthcoming. Connolly, who had realised how bad a season it was for a strike, yet calculated all along that a week or so of his leadership would teach strikers and employers alike tactics and lessons hitherto unknown in the philosophies of either. Calling his followers together, he told them that the rules and oppressive conditions in the mills could be broken down by the simple expedient of returning to work, and systematically defying every galling and unreasonable rule.

" If a girl," he told them, " is checked for singing, let the whole room start singing at once ; if you are checked for laughing, let the whole room laugh at once ; and if any one

is dismissed, all put on your shawls and come out in a body. And when you are returning, don't return as you generally do, but gather in a body outside the gate, and march in singing and cheering!" After scenes of tumult with perplexed and angry managers, these tactics proved an effective means of humanising the lives of the Belfast mill workers who had listened so gladly to Connolly's humorous speech and carried out his advice with Northern thoroughness.

As a diplomat, when occasion demanded, James Connolly equally proved himself. The strike in Wexford foundries, notably in Pierce & Sons, was one of the great struggles undertaken by the Irish Transport Union under Larkin's leadership. It arose on the question of recognition of the union. Connolly played the outstanding part in terminating the dispute after twenty-six weeks, effecting a settlement described by himself as "a drawn battle," and in the racy phrase of Jim Larkin when he heard the terms: "The men are on top. It's a bad cock which crows too often!"

Following the arrest of P. T. Daly, on a charge of "inciting to riot," Connolly arrived in Wexford in January, 1912. The strike had been a stormy one, and both sides had grown obdurate. The difficult situation was handled with skill by Connolly, who declared the workers should return to work undefeated and undismayed. His eloquence upheld the strikers, and in negotiations he smoothed over apparently irreconcilable difficulties. The employers refused to recognise the Irish Transport Union. Connolly, however, persuaded them to recognise an Irish Foundry Workers' Union, and complete reinstatement for all within a month. The delighted employers raised no objection to the new union's affiliation with Larkin's detested organisation.

The terms of settlement and the reports of Connolly's speeches in the *Wexford Free Press*, throw out in bold relief an aspect of Connolly's character too often ignored by perfervid admirers of the man. His arguments were logical and persuasive. He was never afraid of stooping to conquer, and, when he did compromise, he compromised

with a good grace. His triumph in this instance deepened the impression the sturdy stand of the foundry workers had made upon all sorts and conditions of people.

Connolly's enemies retained the impression also that there was fight in him still. He urged the employers in public and private to remember that the day had gone when they could walk over the men in a body. He told them plainly that he was anxious for a settlement, but they must not take this disposition for weakness. He praised the endurance of the strikers, urged them to preserve a peaceful attitude and keep their spirits up. He declared he wished Irish industry to be built up, but not on a slave population.

Wexford blazed with tar barrels. Bands, processions, and enthusiastic demonstrations became the order of the day in the workless town. Connolly drew the moral in a characteristic speech : the rising in Wexford had succeeded, and the men could go back with heads erect and gay hearts, knowing that they had asserted and won the rights of men.

In the same year, May, 1912, Connolly attended at Clonmel the Irish Trade Union Congress for the first time, and made a strong appeal for independent Labour representation on all public boards. Larkin, William O'Brien, D. R. Campbell, Belfast, and others, joined their voices to support Connolly's rousing plea. Congress, by a large majority, decided to form " an Irish Labour Party, independent of all other parties in the country, in order that the organised workers might be able to enter the proposed Irish Parliament as an organised Labour Party on the political field." In any Home Rule Parliament, Connolly predicted a stern fight against fundamentally conservative and reactionary elements. Ulster financial magnate and Southern farmer would unite to prevent amelioration of the labourers' lot and the union of workers, north and south.

Connolly's views on the value of political action must be briefly dwelt on here. It is quite possible that under certain circumstances in earlier years he might have even entered Westminster, swearing an oath of allegiance, in

Mazzini's spirit, that sacred were all the instruments that free a people, and that theological questions thereupon lay between God and those who imposed such an oath. Passages in the early *Workers' Republic* * suggest that this would be no unfair interpretation of his thought :

" Concurrently with the gradual shaping of our industrial activities towards the end of industrial union, Labour must necessarily attach the political and municipal citadels of power.† "

" Every effort should be made to extend the scope of public ownership. As Democracy invades and captures public powers, public ownership will of necessity be transformed and infused with a new spirit. As Democracy enters, Bureaucracy takes flight. But without the power of the industrial union behind it, Democracy can only enter the State as the victim enters the gullet of the serpent."

" Therefore political power must for the working classes come straight out of the industrial battlefield as the expression of the organised economic force of Labour ; else it cannot come at all. With Labour properly organised upon the industrial and political field, each extension of the principle of the public ownership brings us nearer to the reconquest of Ireland by its people ; it means the gradual resumption of the common ownership of all Ireland by all the Irish—the realisation of freedom." Or again : " Voting at the ballot-box is the one act in which we get an opportunity to give expression to the soul of the race . . . tangible body to public spirit."

Until the gigantic struggle of 1913, Connolly remained in Belfast, leaving the south to Larkin's fiery and energetic care. Cynics, who wondered at the amicable union of two so dissimilar characters, declared that they had partitioned Ireland between them in the interests of peace. To any other partition of Ireland, James Connolly, of course, if only from the interests of Labour view-point alone, was an implacable enemy. " I would fight to the death against

* See " Labour in Irish History," p. 209.
† " Reconquest of Ireland," Chap. IX.

partition," he said repeatedly, "Another politician's fine excuse to delay and split the workers' movement in Ireland!" Writing in the *Irish Worker* early in 1914 on partition, Connolly spoke in these terse terms: "To it Labour should give the bitterest opposition, against it Labour in Ulster should fight even to the death if necessary, as our fathers fought before us."

In the midst of these active triumphs, we must never ignore James Connolly's high achievements as a pioneer in another sphere much neglected. The reader who has come thus far must have paused to admire the clear and trenchant style of Connolly's writings. As a pioneer historian of Irish Labour, he justly stands high and foremost in the first rank. It was his dream to extend his researches further at some more propitious moment, to examine the growth of trades, guilds, and unions in Ireland, to re-examine the close relations between social discontent and political upheavals throughout Irish history, and to re-emphasise the importance of property, its ownership and development, in every discussion of Irish nationality. But as an investigator of actual Irish economic conditions, who yet has paid a proper meed of praise to James Connolly, or to his suggestions for their more immediate amelioration?

Dublin, to James Connolly, was Ireland in miniature, blend of splendour and meanness, soaring to heaven, or, betimes, rolling in the muck, with queenly spaces, buildings of beauty, speaking stones, spaces and rows of deep historic memory and interest—most lovable of all the cities of the earth. But well he knew its scars, the undercurrents of squalor, crime and human wrong, an appalling lack of civic consciousness. Connolly burrowed in his scanty leisure into many volumes of health reports and housing commissions. He found that Dublin's death-rate in 1911 was 27·6 per 1,000—highest of all European cities, even not excepting Moscow's 26·3 per 1,000 under the Czar's despotic rule. In Calcutta, with plague and cholera, he found, it is true, a death-rate of 27 per 1,000! And by careful analysis he proved, quoting eminent authorities, that the high death-

rate fell heaviest upon Dublin's poorer classes. He held up the notorious tenements of the Irish metropolis, 20,000 humble families living in one room apiece, to popular execration and scorn. He asked why prostitution flaunted itself more blatantly in Dublin than in many less professedly Christian cities. He printed tables of sweating wages, naming the employers who paid them with the taunt: "Now bring on your libel actions!" In season and out of season, Connolly urged the Irish workers to show more public spirit, to adopt democracy as a reasoned faith, and to compel the Dublin Corporation and other public bodies to enforce their powers, already on the Statute Book, of closing, cleaning and lighting insanitary dwellings; to have proper houses built; and to demand where needed an extension of existing powers.*

In Belfast, too, Connolly equally waged a similar holy war to the consternation of Orange and Green Lodges alike. Belfast, from the municipal viewpoint, he has described as comparing favourably with any similar city in Great Britain, with better, cheaper and cleaner houses than Dublin. Belfast industrial conditions were not unique, he said, but its "guid fighting religion" and pharasaical self-righteousness were. Northern capitalism tore his heart with cruel rage.

In Belfast, Connolly contested Dock Ward in January, 1913, polling 900 votes. Amongst his many activities his revival of the agitation for the feeding of school children should be mentioned. His efforts were largely responsible for having the Act extended to Ireland. Many an eloquent passage in his writings bears witness to his deep interest in the cause of woman's enfranchisement.

"In Ireland the women's cause," he wrote,† "is felt by all Labour men and women as their cause. . . . The worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave. . . . In Ireland that female worker has hitherto exhibited in her martyrdom an almost damnable

* "Reconquest of Ireland," Chaps. IV., V.
† *Ibid.*, Chap. VI.

patience. . . . Just as the present system in Ireland has made cheap slaves or untrained emigrants of the flower of our peasant women, so has it darkened and starved the intellect of the female operatives in mills, shops and factories. . . . Of what use to such sufferers can be the re-establishment of any form of Irish State if it does not embody the emancipation of womanhood ? . . . None so fitted to break the chains as they who wear them, none so well equipped to decide what is a fetter. In its march towards freedom the working class of Ireland must cheer on the efforts of those women who, feeling on their souls and bodies the fetters of ages, have arisen to strike them off, and cheer all the louder if in its hatred of thraldom and passion for freedom the women's army forges ahead of the militant army of Labour. But whosoever carries the outworks of the citadel of oppression, the working class alone can raze it to the ground." These extracts well illustrate the writers' general views. In 1913, Connolly travelled specially to Dublin to address a woman's suffrage demonstration in Phœnix Park, where much opposition was experienced by the demonstrators.

" A. E.," George Russell, was another influence which left a mark on James Connolly as the great Labour struggle of 1913 drew near. They met first in that year and became fast friends. Connolly has left on record a cordial tribute to the " great genius and magnetic personality of Mr. Russell," * who " brought to the long-neglected toilers of Dublin a new conception, viz., that the co-operative societies which had been so long and so successfully propagating themselves throughout the agricultural areas of the country might yet be linked up with the fortunes of the industrial workers in such a manner that, serving the other's temporary needs, they could between them lay the groundwork of a new social order." Connolly bespoke the constant support of every friend of progress in Ireland for so noble and high a vision, and was, indeed, always an ardent advocate of co-operation, another of the hopes and possibilities before the rising Labour movement.

* " Reconquest of Ireland," Chaps. VIII., IX.

And if any words of this Labour leader of Labour leaders could sum up his rare, militant and many-sided spirit, surely it is those he wrote after the Dublin Strike of 1913, which draw a moral and illuminate a personality : " Everywhere we see friends where formerly we met only suspicion and mistrust, and we realise that the difference with which Labour is regarded now to what it met formerly, is the difference with which the world at large treats those who simply claim its pity, and those who are strong and self-reliant enough to enforce its respect." *

* " Reconquest of Ireland," Chap. IX.

CHAPTER V

THE LABOUR WAR OF 1913

Our army marches onward with its face towards the dawn,
In trust secure in that one thing the slave dare lean upon ;
The might within the arm of him who, knowing Freedom's worth,
Strikes home to banish tyranny from off the face of earth.*

A SIGNIFICANT and unmistakable landmark, the great industrial struggle of 1913, stands out in the history of the Labour movement ; the struggle between capitalism and industrial democracy had awakened on Irish soil. In the August of that year, the principal employers of the capital combined to carry out their long cherished and contemplated design of smashing the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Since 1911, when Larkin had aroused the vague, incoherent and almost helpless masses and wielded them into harmonious union, articulate, organised, and militant, the attempt had been under consideration. William Martin Murphy, personally an excellent employer, who subsequently taunted the more timid ones he led against Larkin as the real authors of Larkinism, was the moving spirit and inspirer of the attack. This venerable old man, with pointed beard, pallid face, pinched features, piercing eyes, and stoop, owned half Dublin and much elsewhere, lived in Dartry Hall and controlled the *Irish Independent*, to the daily and machined thunders of which came in reply weekly, the honest, if savage snarlings of the *Irish Worker*—outspoken organ of a great popular movement, with columns open to all comers.

William Martin Murphy provoked a strike, epoch-making and lasting in its results. His iron will, and allies' resources,

* "Songs of Freedom," by James Connolly.

temporarily routed the Labour forces, but in a powerful and nation-wide movement the coming years brought their swift revenge. Six months' idleness and starvation did some 20,000 odd Dublin workers face for the bare right to belong to the trade union of their choice. Existing political parties—Nationalist, Unionist, Republican and Sinn Fein, the Press, the Church—were hostile to an extreme degree, but upon that vital point the battle ended in a stalemate, although the union remained shattered in membership and almost bankrupt financially on the morrow.

Jim Larkin, not unjustly struck the popular eye as the inspiration, and, indeed, as the fomentor of the revolt. From an open window in Liberty Hall the well-known figure of the strike leader dominated the scene—a strong, sturdy, fighting frame, a face of rare determination and purpose, with fierce blue eyes that drop before no man's, a voice that seemed as the long silent voice of the under-people, ringing out with a rude, eloquent beauty upon a hitherto listless, now startled world. Expectant, lively, determined Irish workers thronged the windows, the steps, the sordid, greasy, chilly flagstones to the dank riverside, whilst the usual complement of huge black-coated police constables bepimpled the throng.

Night after night, this husky, roaring giant of a Larkin thunders out the straightest talks that have ever stirred a multitude ; no balanced periods, no favourite whimsicalities, no cleverly prepared surprises. Nay, none of these, nor the recondite philosophy of a Karl Marx, the subtle triflings of a George Bernard Shaw, the sentimental if trenchant appeals of a Keir Hardie ; but rather facts known to the audience, the virtues of temperance, bowelless employers, white-livered curs, adjectived scabs, and other obnoxious individuals. Above all, what was to be done that night, to-morrow, next week. Dublin workers—to whom even his bitterest enemies grudgingly admit he murmurs : " Hope ! "—tighten teeth and belts to an enthusiastic murmur : " Good luck to you, Jim Larkin ! We will fight on ! " John Churchill, Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Lieutenant,

is impressed, sends for this agitator and there are piquant exchanges in Dublin Castle—"'Damn it all, Jim!' said Aberdeen,'" quotes Larkin, passing on to his grandfather's fate in '98. . . .

Pearse, intent upon eventual revolt, pauses to admire this man, vowing he is more dangerous than all the professed enemies of Dublin Castle put together, with more to his credit in six months too, but troubled with misgivings at the New Evangel the two leaders of Irish Labour preach: international solidarity, the union of the workers, everywhere beneath all flags and across all frontiers, with similar war cries, soon to sound more faintly in the blood and heat of a world war. To that gospel Dublin workers listen, wondering the while: "The green flag over Dublin Castle or the Union Jack? What the devil does it matter?"

Connolly is to the fore now with his clear-cut gospel of industrial control reinforced by appeals to Irish history in which, he insists, stomach has counted as much as soul or brain. Ireland is in the grip of a new idea. Larkin had united Orange and Green in that Satan's stronghold of mediæval hysteria, Belfast. For both leaders now the grimmer satisfaction of provoking a less satisfactory union, and proving the accuracy of their forecasts as to the peculiar paths Labour must tread in Ireland. From the housetops they had shouted that political freedom was no panacea for Ireland's ills, that the existing political parties had nothing to offer Irish workers which they could not better take themselves, that Labour had its own right to a distinct place in the nation, to an independent existence and power politically—blasphemies hitherto, platitudes to-day.

The strike of 1913 aptly earned the description of a Labour war, inasmuch as it was not merely a war for the principle of the worker's right to join the trade union of his choice, but a war also to win for Labour recognition as an independent and indispensable part in the Irish nation. From sweater to ward politician, from Dublin Castle to Dartry Hall, from startled ecclesiastics, startled Nationalist doctrinaires, startled word-spinners and dreamers, all

aghast before reality, sincerity and human wrong—long repressed, now a-kick at length—roared forth a chorus of fear and hate. But when the chaos and terror had passed, the giant of Irish Labour slowly tottered—erect, never to fall again. Starkly two facts revealed themselves as the lock-out dragged its weary but inspiring eight months' course along: Sectarian and political divisions were dwarfed to insignificance by class interests; while in dogged tenacity, improved organisation and a movement, unquestionably in advance of its day in the industrial sphere, Labour in Ireland struck the imagination of the world.

Irritated by dismissals of their comrades, on the eve of the famous Dublin Horse Show, a few tramwaymen struck work, and the trouble spread rapidly. Bound by solemn pledge and in alliance, the employers were sworn to disrupt and crush the One Big Union of grades and units with its war-cry of "An injury to one is the concern of all!" Henceforward, the ukase ran—no worker would find employment, from some 400 employers of Dublin City, who did not sign an undertaking that he or she would never belong to or help the dreaded I.T.G.W.U.

Practically the entire Dublin trade union world took up the challenge, and before long thirty-seven unions were involved, including some previously reputed hostile to "Larkinism." Police brutality and Dublin Castle tactics soon fanned feeling to white heat. The dreaded "sympathetic strike" and counter "sympathetic lock-out" of the employers shook the city's economic fabric to its foundations.

"What is the sympathetic strike?" wrote Connolly once.* "It is the recognition by the working class of its essential unity, the manifestation in our daily industrial relations that our brother's fight is our fight, that our sister's troubles are our troubles, that we are all members one of another. In practical operation it means that when any body of workers are in conflict with their employers, that all other workers should co-operate with them in attempting to bring

* "Reconquest of Ireland," Chap. IV.

that particular employer to reason by refusing to handle his goods. That in fact every employer who does not consent to treat his workpeople upon a civilised basis should be placed and kept outside the amenities and facilities offered by civilised communities. . . . The idea is not new. It is as old as humanity. . . . The Vehmgerichte of Germany . . . is one instance. The boycott of Land League days is another. In that boycott the very journals and politicians who are denouncing the Irish Transport Union used a weapon which, in its actual operations, was more merciless, cruel and repulsive than any sympathetic strike has ever yet been. And even the Church, in its strength and struggles, when it was able to command obedience to its decrees of excommunication, supplied history with a stern application of the same principle which for thoroughness we could never hope to equal. . . .

"Historically, the sympathetic strike can find ample justification. But—this point must be emphasised—it was not mere cool reasoning which gave it birth in Dublin. In that city it was born of desperate necessity. Seeing all classes of semi-skilled labour in Dublin so wretchedly underpaid and so atrociously sweated, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union taught them to stand together and help one another, and out of this advice the more perfect weapon has grown."

Connolly further explains that the greater proportion of unskilled labour in Dublin explains why the movement had used the weapon sooner than elsewhere. In contrast to the capitalist and old-fashioned trade unionist, the Irish workers insist almost fiercely that there were no rights without duties, and the first duty was to help one another: "This is, indeed, revolutionary and disturbing, but not half as much as would be a practical following out of the moral precepts of Christianity."

Swiftly the arm of authority fell upon the workers' leaders. Larkin, speaking later at Beresford Place, declared that his followers would not bear official brutality, but would arm themselves as the Ulster north-east corner had

done under exalted patronage. Here was the origin of the famous Citizen Army, he, Connolly and Captain Jack White, D.S.O., founded in the November following. Connolly always believed that the employers had obtained the promise beforehand of the swift and relentless use of governmental forces against the workers. Larkin, William O'Brien, William P. Partridge, P. T. Daly and Thomas Lawlor were arrested, returned for trial, shortly after the strike's commencement in August, but were released on bail to a city seething with excitement, and deepening turmoil. A meeting in O'Connell Street announced for Sunday, August 31st following, was " proclaimed."

Minor clashes between police and strikers had marked the beginnings of the struggle, hand-to-hand tussles between the law and the people punctuated the nightly gatherings in Beresford Place, feeling grew more and more intense. The daily Press poured oil on the flames with bitterly partisan accounts of events, and such soothing epithets as " howling rabble." The official pinpricks culminated in the savage baton charges by Dublin Metropolitan Police in O'Connell Street the following Sunday. Constables and Royal Irish Constabulary drafted in from country districts took up positions in force in this central thoroughfare, while military were in readiness in city barracks. Jim Larkin, to the very minute announced for the meeting, made a sudden and dramatic appearance upon the balcony of the Imperial Hotel, the property of William Martin Murphy. Tearing off a false beard, he commenced to address the passers-by. Following his prompt arrest, the police ran amok, brutally and indiscriminately batoning men, women, children, and one British Liberal M.P., Mr. Handel Booth. Press photographs of the scene proved beyond doubt the irresponsible and indiscriminate character of the baton charges. In one part of the city military were called out. Angry and menacing scenes between police and people increased. On certain lines police and military escorts had to be provided for " loyal " tram-drivers.

Intense scenes marked the funeral of James Nolan, a

young Dublin worker, who succumbed to his injuries in the baton charge of that savage and delirious Sunday, long a burning memory to the mass of Dubliners. Such incidents, no doubt, played their part in callousing the popular heart when, in later years, police constabulary behind sandbagged windows cried to solitary wayfarers, begging a night's lodging: "Who's there? Friends, indeed! We haven't a friend in the world!"

Impressed by the statements of the Irish fraternal delegation to the British Trade Union Congress, then in session at Manchester, that body pledged itself to supply food to the Dublin workers for the duration of the strike.

The insistent propaganda of the *Daily Herald*, as well as the horror aroused by the official brutalities, helped to fire rank and file sentiment amongst the more forward elements in the British Labour world. Amongst the staunchest champions of the Dublin workers were Messrs. George Lansbury and Keir Hardie. The latter, in company with Mr. Arthur Henderson, arrived in Dublin as delegates from the British Congress, and vainly endeavoured to effect a settlement.

But the employers continued obdurate. Several conferences between them and the British Labour delegates, at the second of which Dublin Trade Council representatives were present, broke down, and the attack on trade unionism continued. Connolly, upon Larkin's arrest, took over the direction of affairs. "The Government's first mistake," he said jestingly in after days, "was to jail Jim, their second to release him!" As organiser, orator and editor of the *Irish Worker*, he proved a fiery, calculating and able captain to the vast mass under his leadership. Previously arrested, he had secured release after a few days' hunger-strike. The employers had silenced Larkin for a spell, but, to their consternation, here arose an antagonist as implacable, colder, but, if anything, more dangerous, than the much denounced Jim.

Taciturn, but coldly partial, and furnace-hearted, this Ulsterman presents a striking contrast to his more vivid

and picturesque colleague with whom, by a miracle, he works in harness, ever disappointing the enemies of their common cause who gamble confidently upon a split, a clash of personalities which never openly comes. "We speak with different accents," Connolly tells astonished British Labour leaders, who flatter him, while Larkin thunders and storms at a famous special Congress; "but at heart Larkin and I are one, and what is more, you shall never split the Irish Transport Workers' Union!"

So while Larkin flashes in the public eye, Connolly moves, passionate, restrained, but fiery upon occasion, rousing an audience of National University students to high enthusiasm as he lectures on "A Labourer's Ideal for Ireland," startling an excellent employer with the fierce protest that in a class war innocent must suffer with guilty, sheep with lamb, or bringing massed picketing and similar I.W.W. modernisms into the industrial sphere or holding an Albert Hall audience spell-bound with grim, tense and flaming vision of Dublin's lower depths, her toilers' ordeals and dreams, of how by personal experience the iron of the workers' lot has eaten into the very core of his soul—this small, round, tense man, with few gestures, Northern accent and flashing eye. No roaring giant he, but leashed tiger rather, who has tasted blood and will taste more upon occasion.

Austere in his way, too; non-smoker, non-drinker, and severe upon rhetoricians, but yielding to the temptation of the golden phrase himself, now and then! German he knows, French, Italian, Esperanto too, some Irish, much economic, revolutionary, historical and general lore. Upon his bookshelves, John Mitchel, Karl Marx, Davitt's "Fall of Feudalism," Lissagaray's "History of the Paris Commune," and James Fintan Lalor's writings, dispute the places of honour with poets and novelists of action. Woe betide the careless visitor who dare treat that treasury irreverently!

A formidable match, this pair, Jim Larkin and James Connolly, who, again let us repeat, by a kind Fate never collide, but whose collisions with economic institutions help

powerfully to turn Dublin into a city of revolutions for ten and more long years to come.

Released on bail, Larkin carried his fiery cross to England, where Connolly's addresses and articles in the Labour Press also helped to increase the rank and file movement for a blockade of Dublin and general strike to bring "Murphyism" to its knees. Railmen in Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester came out. Unrest grew on both sides of the Irish Sea. In Beresford Place Irish workers cheered the two Governmental election defeats which quashed Larkin's seven months' sentence. Stormy scenes marked a Special Trade Union Congress in London, where Larkin and Connolly pleaded in divers tones of passion and reason for more militant action. In Dublin the strikers' ranks grew, foodships sailed in from Britain. Conference succeeded conference, and eventually after eight months the drawn battle ended. Formal recognition of the Transport Union was refused, but the grand attack upon trade unionism had failed, the absorption of "free" labourers proceeded apace, while wages appreciably increased.

"The battle was a drawn battle," Connolly insisted in a review of the situation.* "The employers, despite their Napoleonic plan of campaign, and their more than Napoleonic ruthlessness, and unscrupulous use of foul means, were unable to carry on their business without men and women who remained loyal to their unions. The workers were unable to force the employers to a formal recognition of the Union, and to give preference to organised labour. From the effects of this drawn battle, both sides are still bearing heavy scars. How deep those scars are none will ever reveal."

In words of profound feeling, he continued to describe how great an opportunity the recent ordeal offered some future Irish writer, of honest and human sympathies, to tell a tale of popular travail, triumph and stress: "It will tell of how, like an inspiration, there came to those Irish women and girls the thought that no free nation could be reared

* *Irish Worker*, November 28th, 1914.

which tolerated the enslavement of its daughters to the worst forms of wage slavery, and how in the glow of that inspiration they arose from their seats in the workshop or factory and went out to suffer and struggle along with their men. It will tell of how the general labourers, the men upon whose crushed lives are built the fair fabric of civilisation, from whose squalid tenements the sweet smelling flowers of capitalist culture derive their aroma, by whose horny hands and mangled bodies are brought the ease and safety of a class that hates and despises them, by whose ignorance their masters purchase their knowledge—it will tell how these labourers dared to straighten their bent backs, and looking in the faces of their rulers, dared to express the will to be free. And it will tell how that spectacle of the slave of the underworld, looking his masters in the face without terror, and fearlessly proclaiming the kinship and union of all with each and each with all, how that spectacle caught the imagination of all unselfish souls, so that the skilled artisan took his place also in the place of conflict and danger, and the men and women of genius, the artistic and the *literati*, hastened to honour and serve those humble workers whom all had hitherto despised and scorned."

A significant sign, indeed, of the changing times was the active sympathy of the "intellectuals." Mr. George W. Russell, "A. E.," in a famous letter * indicted the masters of Dublin as heirs of the Dark Ages, telling them to cry aloud to heaven for new souls, that they were sounding industrial autocracy's death-knell, and warning them "that even in the Dark Ages humanity could not endure the sight of such suffering, and it learnt of such misuse of power by slow degrees through rumour, and when it was certain it razed the Bastilles to their foundations. It remained for the twentieth century and the capital city of Ireland to see an oligarchy of 400 masters deciding openly upon starving 100,000 people, and refusing to consider any solution except that fixed by their pride. You, masters, asked men to do

* *Irish Times*, October 7th, 1913.

that which masters of labour in any other city in these islands had not dared to do. You insolently demanded of those men who were members of a trade union that they should resign from that union; and from those that were not members, you insisted upon a vow that they would never join it.

"Your insolence and ignorance of the rights conceded to workers universally in the modern world were incredible, and as great as your inhumanity. If you had between you collectively a portion of human soul as large as a three-penny bit you would have sat night and day with the representatives of Labour, trying this or that solution of the trouble, mindful of the women and children who at least were innocent of wrong against you. But no! you reminded Labour you could always have your three square meals a day while it went hungry. You went into conference again with representatives of the State,* because, dull as you are, you knew public opinion would not stand your holding out. You chose as your spokesman the bitterest tongue that ever wagged in this island, and then when an award was made by men who have an experience in industrial matters a thousand times transcending yours; who have settled disputes in industries so great that the sum of your petty enterprises would not equal them, you withdrew again, and will not agree to accept their solution and fall back again on your devilish policy of starvation."

Official Nationalism, as represented by the Irish Parliamentary Party, remained silent and indeed hostile, with the honourable exceptions of the late Professor T. M. Kettle, who initiated a Dublin Industrial Peace Committee, and Mr. Stephen Gwynn who spoke out courageously and graciously in defence of Larkin and the workers generally. The Dublin M.P.'s were dubbed tersely and truly by the

* Reference is made to a Commission with Sir George Askwith presiding. The Report issued suggested a Conciliation Court, and condemned the pledge demanded of the workers. Larkin gave evidence at its sittings. Mr. T. M. Healy, K.C., was leading counsel for the employers.

eloquent man of letters just quoted: "The Seven Poltroons." These gentlemen contented themselves with writing to the daily Press, disavowing all responsibility. In the *Irish Worker*, W. B. Yeats and James Stephens wrote with passion and candour of a machined pseudo-religious agitation aroused by the sending of the strikers' children to homes in England and Scotland. To Professor Kettle, however, the fact that Dublin mothers were willing thus to part with their children was an eloquent index of intolerable social wrong.

Prophetic portent of a coming upheaval and fraternal union was the prominence Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett, critical sympathisers, gave to Connolly's statement of his comrade's case in the *Irish Review*. The Republican organ, *Irish Freedom*, then edited by Mr. Bulmer Hobson, preserved a more or less neutral attitude. The paper was strongly supported by the Wolfe Tone clubs, and from its foundation in 1910, endeavoured to promote a more friendly feeling between the rising Republican movement and the growing Labour movement. It had not, upon Labour questions, the frankly partisan outlook of the *Irish Worker*, but from its first issue it attacked sweated industries elsewhere than in Belfast; pleaded for a more thorough study of economic problems, the wages system included; published serially an Irish translation of Kropotkin's "Fields, Factories and Workshops"; appreciated the real causes of industrial unrest, and cordially hailed the new Co-operative movement. The editor invited Mr. George W. Russell to expound his ideals for the Co-operative Commonwealth in its columns.

There also appeared the outspoken, if detached, comments of P. H. Pearse*: "It is not amusing to be hungry." Pearse wrote, already dreaming and planning martial adventures. "Twenty thousand Dublin families live in one-room tenements. It is common to find two or three

* Pearse's remarks were afterwards reprinted in a pamphlet "From a Hermitage." Connolly later in the *Workers' Republic*, July 3rd, 1915, expresses surprise to find a literary hermit so "wisely sympathetic."

families occupying the same room : and sometimes one of the families will have a lodger. There are tenement rooms in Dublin in which over a dozen persons live, eat and sleep. The tenement houses of Dublin are so rotten that they periodically collapse upon their inhabitants,* and if the inhabitants collect in the streets to discuss matters the police baton them to death.

" These are among the grievances against which men in Dublin are beginning to protest. Can you wonder that protest at last is made ? Can you wonder that the protest is crude and bloody ? I do not know whether the methods of Mr. James Larkin are wise methods or unwise methods (unwise, I think, in some respects), but this I know, that here is a most hideous wrong to be righted, and that the man who attempts honestly to right it is a good man and a brave man ! "

The official Sinn Fein organ generally regarded strikes as the unpardonable sin. Amongst the most hostile and outspoken critics of Larkin and the workers was the late Mr. Arthur Griffith, who, however, preserved throughout a cordial admiration for James Connolly, whom he described as " a man of his word," recalling their old and unshaken friendship which dated from their common membership of the Celtic Literary Society during Connolly's early years in Dublin. Despite his fair conflict with Connolly ; his by no means so fair conflict with Larkin ; acrid personalities ; lectures on " foreign agitators," and political economy, Mr. Griffith urged a conciliation board to regulate industrial disputes—a plank of the Sinn Fein programme since 1906—becoming more mellow and open-minded in his views on these questions towards the end of his life.

And Conservative at heart as he was, he doubtless read with a grim satisfaction the stinging criticisms James Connolly was to make, at a somewhat later stage, when certain British Labour allies of 1913, perfervid and very mild alike developed into ultra-jingoes in 1914.

* A reference to the collapse of two large tenements in Church Street shortly before. There was serious loss of life.

Mr. Griffith invariably referred to Larkin as " The Strike Organiser," and to Connolly as " the one man in the leadership of the Transport Union with a head on his shoulders." It is but proper to quote a detailed expression of Mr. Griffith's views,* characteristic of him at his best : " Sinn Fein is a national, not a sectional movement, and because it is national, it must not and cannot tolerate injustice and oppression within the nation. It will not, at least, through my voice, associate itself with any war of classes or attempted war of classes. There may be many classes, but there can be only one nation. If there be men who believe that Ireland is a name and nothing more, and that the interest of the Irish working man lies not in sustaining the nation, but in destroying it, that the path to redemption for mankind is through universalism, cosmopolitanism, or any other ' ism ' than Nationalism, I am not of their company. . . . If a legislature is set up in this country, I shall seek to have realised through it that Sinn Fein programme I have mentioned. I shall seek to have its powers increased until they amount to national independence, and with the increase of its powers *increase not only the wealth of the country, which is not prosperity, but the just distribution of that wealth, which is prosperity.*"

" The free nation I desire to see rise again upon the soil of Ireland is no offspring of despair—no neo-feudalism—with Marx and Lassalle and Proudhon as its prophets. . . . I trust no man will tell me he loves all humanity equally well, for I know that the man who loves all humanity equally well can love nobody in particular. I know that the man who loves all his neighbour's children with his own is a bad father."

Connolly's relations with Griffith were always very cordial, and perhaps no better example could be advanced in support of the former's claim that " a conservative temperament is not necessarily allied to social abuses or industrial sweating, but may be, very often is, the most painstaking of all the elements making for the correction of such abuses within

* *Sinn Fein*, November, 1913.

certain limits." Griffith's political economy based on the German, Friedrich List, was not Connolly's, nor did Connolly venerate the Irish Parliament of Grattan, or pay much heed to the Renunciation Act of 1782.* It is but just to recall that Mr. Griffith's record, as far as political democracy went, was less open to criticism. In the days of his strength as a political leader—so, too; in the days of his weakness—Arthur Griffith was a staunch advocate of women's suffrage and proportional representation. But it is interesting to note that from the attitude of the Sinn Fein organ, at its worst, Eamonn Ceannt—the only signatory of the 1916 Republican proclamation, who, strictly speaking, could be described as a Sinn Feiner—publically disassociated himself.

Speaking later of two of his 1913 allies, one who had "a constant job on the recruiting platform," and another, "a brilliant revolutionist," who was declaring that "the termination of the European war at that moment would result in serious disaster," Connolly wrote of these former targets of Mr. Griffith's most acid reproaches, Messrs. Tillett and Mann †: "These two men were, before the War, the greatest of Internationalists, and rather despised our Irish love of our own nationality as being mere sentimental slop, and entirely out of date. Now they are raving jingoes, howling for the blood of every rival of the British capitalist class."

Nevertheless, Connolly remained intolerant of the stock Nationalist and Republican criticisms of British Labour jingoism, maintaining invariably that only those who were guiltless of jingoism and "patriotic" illusions themselves, and who had been consistently Internationalist, could pose as critics thereof. Again and again he strikes this note ‡: "We are out to free Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting slum-owning landlord; not the sweating profit-grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute Press-man—the hired liars

* "Labour in Irish History," Chap. VI.
† *Workers' Republic*, April 15th, 1916.
‡ *Ibid.*, April 15th, 1916.

of the enemy. Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared. The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland. The cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour. They cannot be dessevered. Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things upon her soil."

"Labour seeks to make the Free Irish Nation the guardian of the interests of the people of Ireland, and, to secure that end, would vest in that Free Irish Nation all property rights as against the claims of the individual with the end in view that he may be enriched by the Nation and not by the spoiling of his fellows."

"Having such a high and holy function for the Nation to perform, is it not well and fitting that we of the working class should fight for the freedom of the Nation from foreign rule as the first requisite for the free development of the National powers needed for our class?"

Or again: "The Labour movement is like no other movement. Its strength lies in its being like no other movement. It is never so strong as when it stands alone. Other movements dread analysis and shun all attempts to define their objects. The Labour movement delights in analysing, and is perpetually defining its principles and objects. The men and women who have caught the spirit of the Labour movement bring that spirit of analysis and definition into all their public acts, and expect at all times to answer the call to define their position. They cannot live on illusions or thrive by them; even should they have their heads in the clouds they will make no forward step until they are assured that their feet rest on the solid earth.

"In this they are essentially different from the middle or professional classes, or the parties or movements controlled by such parties in Ireland. . . . When the average non-Labour patriot in Ireland, who boasts of his practicality, is brought in contact with the cold world he shrinks from the contact, should his feet touch the solid earth, he affects

to despise it as ' a mere material basis,' and strives to make the people believe that true patriotism needs no other foundation to rest upon but the brain-storms of its poets, orators, journalists and leaders." *

Madame de Markievicz was the most prominent Republican personality who, whole-heartedly, associated herself with the workers' side in the struggle upon many platforms, and in the communal kitchen she organised in Liberty Hall to feed the strikers' wives and children, winning the gratitude and admiration of James Connolly by her vigorous advocacy and untiring efforts. Prominent amongst the workers' leaders were William P. Partridge, Sean Connolly and Michael Mallin, all of whom subsequently owed their deaths, directly or indirectly, to the 1916 rising.

Daily, Captain Jack White, D.S.O., drilled his Citizen Army men, armed, for the most part, with hurling sticks, in Croyden Park, near Dublin, where Larkin had established a social centre for the workers. The decrease of violence and baton charges towards the close of the strike has been not unjustly ascribed to these semi-martial developments. Evictions, shop-wreckings, and one raid by the Dublin Metropolitan Police into the working-class quarters, when furniture was smashed and many people assaulted, were among the more exciting incidents which marked sundry stages. The world of Labour was stirred to the very depths, the Dublin Strike was discussed abroad in many foreign newspapers, subscriptions to the strike funds coming in generously from throughout Ireland, Great Britain, France, Germany, and further afield. G. K. Chesterton, in a burning poem, well expressed a widespread mood :

> Be they sinners, or less than saints,
> Who smite in the street for rage,
> We know where the shame shines bright,
> We know, lords of the lawless wage, and low
> You that they smite at, you, their foe,
> This is your lawful wage !
>
> . . . . .

* *Workers' Republic*, January, 1916.

You gave the good Irish blood to grease
The clubs of your country's enemies.
You saw the brave man beat to his knees
And you saw that it was good ! *

An able critic and admirer of Connolly has disputed his title to be " the first Socialist martyr " in Ireland, stressing the counter claims of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, that militant yet courteous pacifist, who was well to the fore when Larkin and Connolly led. Without disrespect, the claims of Peadar Macken might be advanced, for he was an outstanding exemplar of the typical Dublin worker, at once profoundly Nationalist and profoundly humanist, long before he died in Boland's Mill in 1916. He knew it was the soundest sense to stand firmly upon Irish soil, but to listen with sympathy and discernment to every breeze which sweeps in from the four seas. Well he knew that beyond the mountains are also oxen.

Briefly one may tell the facts of this great-hearted man's life. He was a leading spirit in the Painters' Society and decorated walls and houses as thoroughly as he loved to paint the new Ireland for Republican enthusiasts amidst the fiery and acid questionings of the disciples of Saint Marx, who has always had friends beside the Liffey. But the Republicans, as ever, were not to be silenced by Karl Marx or Peadar Macken, and were more anxious to tread on the corns of John Bull. Peadar rather commended them for that little idiosyncrasy, and admitted—when angry hecklers at meetings of Cumannacht na h-Eireann (the Socialist Party of Ireland) revelled in distant visions of waving standards, stricken fields, and such gallant vistas—that dreams of blood and glory should fit into one's philosophy of life, but that there were just as important things : bread, houses, books, and a contempt for all mental snobbery or moral cowardice. Moral courage to him was not a Gaelicised edition of the *Morning Post*, or spirited invectives and libels, supported by machine guns, directed against one's political

* Poems by G. K. Chesterton (Burns and Oates) : " A Song of Swords."

opponents. When he followed the largest crowd he always knew why. He voted, for instance, for the admission of Mr. Redmond's nominees to the Irish Volunteers' Provisional Committee because he wanted guns for his countrymen, and thought that was the best way. And he was a Socialist because he feared words as little as bullets.

Peadar Macken was great in many ways, and versatile and always kindly. In the Labour movement of his day he played his part well as a Vice-President of the Dublin Trades Council, as an active worker, propagandist and thinker, and always and ever as the advocate of the full Irish-Ireland ideal. Perhaps it was the Irish language appealed to him most, for he spoke it and wrote it as few who learn the language can write and speak it : as a living medium in which one's best thought is expressed. He fought hard, too, for the claims of Esperanto. The distinct personality of this disciple of Connolly, vital and humour-loving, must linger in the mind. Through his slow speech and behind his curious and genial smile, something singularly appealing and firm unfolded as he spoke, lighting up his dark, thick-set and florid face. Needless to say, he was to the fore in 1913, and worked on until a bullet laid him beneath a tricolour in Boland's Mill. . . .

Often in the pages of the *Irish Worker* he rang the changes in Irish and English of Connolly's creed : " Irish democracy ought to strive consistently after the separation of its country from the yoke that links her destinies with those of the British Crown. The interests of Labour all over the world are identical, it is true, but it is also true that each country had better work out its own salvation on the lines most congenial to its own people." *

Scarred and weakened, for the moment, from the clash and storm of the Labour War of 1913 there arose, in a year's short space, a conscious Labour movement, coherent and confident of the coming day. Already Connolly had tasted of hope deferred, and a more than bitter draught of dis-

* Connolly in *L'Irelande Libre* (Journal of the Irish Colony in Paris), 1897.

illusion. Events were shaping themselves to bring the apparently hostile forces of Labour and Republicanism together, and James Connolly himself to the threshold of strange and unexpected adventures. Yet were 1913 alone his claim to remembrance, Irish Labour and lovers of freedom everywhere would still remember that indomitable man with gratitude and pride.

Long ago Keats had written that a true poet must write with "fire in the heart, and ice in the brain," a phrase which comes irresistibly to mind when one considers Connolly's long years of militant service to the causes of his heart. "It is not," he wrote once,* "the will of the majority which ultimately prevails; that which ultimately prevails is the ideal of the noblest of each generation. Happy, indeed, that race and generation in which the noblest and the will of the majority can unite!" Pregnant words to him who reviews the harvest of Connolly's years!

Note.—For a complete statement of James Connolly's views on internationalism, patriotism, and Labour political activities in Ireland, see *Forward*, Glasgow, May 27th, June 9th, and July 1st, 1911—the famous controversy with William Walker, a Labour Unionist, of Belfast.

* *Workers' Republic*, March 25th, 1916.

CHAPTER VI

PEARSE AND CONNOLLY

Since the Wise Men have not spoken,
I speak who am only a Fool . . .
A Fool who in all his days hath done
Never a prudent thing . . .
O Wise Men, riddle me this. What if my dream
Come true ? And millions unborn shall dwell
In the House I have shaped in my heart—
The noble house of my thought ? *

The son of an Englishman, P. H. Pearse was the first President of the Irish Republic, a foremost Irish-Ireland educationalist, poet, dramatist, and the very soul of the 1916 insurrection. He was, moreover, always a lover and servant of the whole Sovereign Irish people. In his earliest writings, Pearse showed his deep appreciation and horrified realisation of the evils of modern industrialism, its murder of intellect, soul, and the very magic of life, crying aloud that the Gaelic tradition, the revivifying breath from old-world Celtic Sagas, would help to heal these things in Ireland and elsewhere. He was the first Volunteer leader to protest openly that the new Army of Ireland would never be used to suppress the Labour movement. Snobbery, mental and social, invariably moved this austere and self-recluse of a schoolmaster to visible anger.

His father, James Pearse, was a Devonshire man, a sculptor, a Radical who numbered many fighters for freedom, Irish, English and others, among his friends. Literature, art and political polemics he loved. His pamphlet, "England's Duty to Ireland as it Appears to an Englishman," was

* See "The Collected Works of P. H. Pearse" (Maunsel and Roberts, Dublin). Also "The Man Called Pearse."

a bitter and scornful reply to a Dr. Maguire, of Trinity College, Dublin, who had chosen to resurrect some hoary libels and platitudes to defame the Parnellite movement. The reply was widely quoted from pulpit and platform throughout Ireland. Pearse himself was wont to re-read it with pride and affection in hours of gloom. From his father he inherited a deep sympathy for art, literature, and all struggling causes. But it was the Gaelic tradition that stirred him to the depths.

The more one considers Pearse's political ideals, the more one finds the perfect union of force with idealism, an idealism which fully understood the possibilities of every course of action undertaken, never mistaking means for end, formula for gospel, sure of ultimate victory, but persevering steadfastly when all immediate hope had vanished.

James Connolly, too, as we have seen, revealed that quality in different spheres, inspired by a different philosophy, a very realistic Socialist, akin to Lenin and Trotsky in his conception of human life and destiny, and no mere sentimental reformer with a bias to violence, engendered by despair and the execution of his relatives in the past. Full well he knew, however, the significance of the past, and the deep impression carved on the brain and heart of every Irish man and woman thereby. His pulse beat as responsively to Tone and other Irish apostles of the ideas of 1793 as to those who sought inspiration in the golden visions of an earlier communal Gaelic State. "Might," he mused, "the sympathetic student of history, who believed in the possibility of a people by political intuition anticipating the lessons afterwards revealed to them in the sad school of experience, be not indisposed to join with the ardent Irish patriot in his lavish expressions of admiration for the sagacity of his Celtic forefathers who foreshadowed in the democratic organisation of the Irish clan the more perfect organisation of the free society of the future." * Undoubtedly, between these two men, so diverse on a surface view, there was an essential kinship in spirit and ultimate

* "Erin's Hope."

goal. Personal intimacy and discussion served to strengthen this spiritual identity and led to a cordial comradeship when both were thrown together in the autumn of 1914.

Years before, P. H. Pearse had been deeply impressed by a thin, dark, and Italian-looking speaker at a University students' debating society, who had won him over to the cause of women's suffrage. He hardly recognised the James Connolly of that earlier day in the stout, bluff and kindly figure who stood before him, but these were allies thenceforward. It required no bold prophet to foresee the certainty of an historic explosion.

Political hucksters of their day laughed at the notion, although told by Pearse and Connolly, a hundred times, in as many ways, what they stood for and meant to achieve. Perhaps, when one thinks of it, the political hucksters were not so foolish in expecting to fool all the people for some time longer. Rhetoric, corruption and powerful party machines afforded considerable opportunities for bemusing the populace, despite the ripening revolution in the intellect and soul of Ireland.

And there were cranks among the Children of Light then as now, venomous-tongued partisans and gossips with one idea. Republicans were only slowly grasping the lessons of the Labour War of 1913. Workers, stung to madness by low wages and evil conditions, remained aloof from the Sinn Fein and Republican organisations, preferring even certain weak-kneed and doubtful friends to an open and courageous enemy like Arthur Griffith, judging that great Irishman, too often, solely by that one episode. Connolly, as we have seen, of course, argued with, fought and understood Arthur Griffith thoroughly, like a man and not a partisan. Pearse (who, it may be said, incidentally admired Griffith's tenacity, ability and gifts as a journalist, while never sharing Griffith's views or methods) never openly proclaimed his entire social faith until his last years, despite profound and instinctive democratic sympathies. He remained aloof from the Labour movement, notwithstanding his outspoken sympathy in 1913, preferring his own varied

efforts on behalf of the entire Irish people. Perfervid Labourites did not hesitate to denounce him as a social reactionary, as a bourgeois Republican, and with similar meaningless phrases.

Until September, 1914, then, neither Pearse nor Connolly had known each other as intimates, but each had watched with a growing admiration and interest the other's progress in their different spheres, exchanging ideas and advancing towards a union in thought and action which was to influence Irish democratic thought for a decade, to create and leave more than a passing impress upon the constitution of a new Irish State.* Connolly's writings and social philosophy found more than an echo in Pearse's last declarations of national and social faith, which, certainly, cannot be labelled, but remain all the more real and valuable by that very fact ; in brief, he insisted on the necessity for the complete control of the material resources of the nation by the nation and for the nation, using such control over its lands, wealth and wealth-producing instruments, to secure to all strictly equal rights and liberties.

Pearse, indeed, disclaimed the label Socialist, rejecting much implicit in modern Socialist philosophy. But in most unequivocal language, as " The Sovereign People " bears witness,† he declares for a future Irish State in which the whole men and women of Ireland shall be lords and masters, sovereign in liberties and lands, rulers of factories and workshops, owners of the soil. There he salutes " the more virile Labour organisations of to-day " as heirs to Lalor's teachings. There, also, he gives with the exceptions of his poems, " The Rebel " and " The Fool," the best indication of his trust in the unerring popular instinct. His experi-

* " The Parliament (Oireachtas) may provide for the establishment of Functional or Vocational Councils representing branches of the economic and social life of the nation. A law establishing any such Council shall determine its powers, rights and duties and its relations to the Government of the Irish Free State (Saorstat Eireann)."—Article 45, Section II., Irish Constitution.

† See " Collected Works of P. H. Pearse : Political Writings and Speeches " (Maunsel and Roberts, Dublin), pp. 335 *et seq.*

ences as a schoolmaster, his wanderings on foot and awheel through every Gaelic-speaking district in Ireland, his *rôle* as passionate but detached spectator of all movements for freedom within and without Ireland's shores, his flashes of deep imaginative intuition—" I who have spoken with God on the top of His Holy Hill "—led Pearse finally to become much of the same mind as Connolly. Reference to their writings on the eve of 1916 will show substantial agreement as to aims and methods.

" Labour in Ireland " and " The Sovereign People " foreshadow the principles which later both men stated so emphatically in the Republican Proclamation—last testament and death warrant of its authors : " We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be sovereign and indefeasible."

Pearse and Connolly, the most candid of men, were in the best sense politicians and might conceivably, under certain circumstances, in a free Ireland, have fought each other, but as men and not as partisans, be sure, and certainly without the ward-canvasser or thug methods of certain of their spiritual heirs and disciples. A Free Nation to both, was one possessed of " absolute control over its own internal resources and powers, and which has no restrictions upon its intercourse with all other nations, except the restrictions imposed by Nature." *

Readers of Pearse's political writings will recall, especially in " The Separatist Idea," passages not remote in spirit from Connolly's plea for economic conscription.† He urges that human life is more sacred than property, and that the land, railways, canals, factories and workshops, owned by classes and persons who would not own allegiance to an Irish Republican Government should be confiscated and applied to the service of the community loyal to Ireland and its armed citizens.

" Ireland should commence by guaranteeing the rights

* *Workers' Republic*, February 2nd, 1916.
† *Ibid.*, January 15th, 1916.

of its workers to life and liberty, and having guaranteed those rights, should *then* call upon her manhood to protect them with arms in their hands. Whoever in future speaks for Ireland or calls upon Irishmen to arm should remember that the first duty of Irishmen is to reconquer their country —to take it back from those whose sole right to its ownership is based upon conquest. If the arms of the Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army is the military weapon of, the economic conscription of its land and wealth is the military basis for, that reconquest."

Connolly's attitude on the conscription question should be carefully noted. At the all-Ireland Rally against Conscription at the Dublin Mansion House, December 14th, 1915, he advanced identically the arguments just quoted, contending that in certain cases, as in revolutionary France in 1789, or again when Prussia defied Napoleon's armies, every man of honour favoured conscription; the arms of free citizens defended the newly-won soil and rights. In defence of land and liberty, conscription, he added, was always justified. Had Prussian statesmen been slaves to the divine right of landlords, the emancipated peasant occupiers would never have composed Blücher's *Landwehr* to keep free the German Rhine. The edicts of Stein and Hardenberg, he continued, quoting Isaac Butt, and not the needle-gun, won the battle of Sadowa. So little pacifist or conscientious objector was his mood at this period that after a private interview between himself and Thomas MacDonagh, the Irish Volunteers were publicly pledged at this particular meeting to resist conscription by military measures. " It can't be done by dodging policemen or any such constitutional high jinks," added James grimly. Connolly's particular views on the question were strange and startling to the majority of his listeners and won little applause.

While Pearse, in common with most Nationalists, contended that the prime cause of Ireland's ills was foreign government, good, bad or indifferent, and declared that he stood for Ireland as a whole, Connolly was insistent that the

employing and middle classes were bound to the English connection by purse strings. Employers who, because they were Irish, in 1913 posed as Larkin-oppressed capitalists, urged Connolly, in 1914 went on the recruiting ramp, and in 1916 "released" all eligible employees for military service. He further characterised the action of the Dublin Department of Recruiting in circularising city employers for names and addresses of male employees of military age, and facilities to interview this potential cannon fodder during business hours, as a union natural enough between forces making for the social and political enslavement of the Irish people. And should not all the forces aspiring to political and social freedom unite to oppose them and end a common subjection ?

Caustically, betimes, Connolly would insist that, all seeming to the contrary, Ireland was not really a revolutionary country, but a disaffected one, long used to conduct constitutional agitations in revolutionary language, and, what was worse in his opinion, to conduct revolutionary movements with a due regard to law and order. Great orators, singers, reciters and cheerers of heroic sentiments in others, these latter-day Irish, but not revolutionaries, no, not by a thousand miles, preferring to hear what was pleasant rather than what was true, dreading death less than a neighbour's opinion, accepting an international Church and shying at an international trade union. "Our constitutionalism never loves the Empire ; and our rebellion fires no shots at it in anger ! " *

Despite his passionate Nationalism, to the end Connolly was Internationalist. Ireland, to him, was a nation distinct and apart from all others, capable of working out its own destinies and living its own life ; but, as far as his great influence went, he always strove that Irish workers should not be swayed by mere anti-English feeling or hold that hatred of England or enmity to the toiling masses of England,† was equal to love of Ireland or true patriotism.

* *Workers' Republic*, December 4th, 1915.
† *Irish Worker*, October 31st, 1914.

True, he described the English ruling class as the most astute ruling class, and the English workers as the most easily fooled working class in the world, vehemently blaming these, at stages, for responsibility in the conduct of their Government in Ireland, in so far as they made, as a whole, no effective protests against its acts.

" Finally,* let us say that we are sick of the canting talk of those who tell us that we must not blame the British people for the crimes of their rulers against Ireland. We do blame them. In so far as they support the system of society, which makes it profitable for the nation to connive at the subjection of another nation, they are responsible for every crime, committed to maintain that subjection. If there is any section of the British people who believe that Ireland would be justified in ending the British Empire, if she could, in order to escape thraldom to it, then that section may hold itself guiltless of any crime against Ireland. . . .

" Of all the bodies called into existence by the fight against the War and against conscription, is there one British organisation that claims for Ireland (or would even allow Ireland) the same right to determine its national fate, as all the British peace parties insist upon being secured to Belgium. There is not one. . . . For our part, we take our stand upon the fundamental truth that Ireland is a subject nation, and that, therefore, Ireland has no national enemy in Europe save one, and that nation the one that holds her in subjection."

The refusal of the stokers of the *Saxonia* to sail from Liverpool with Irish refugees from an imagined conscription menace in November, 1915, gave Connolly an opportunity to remark bitterly : " Should Dublin dockers go on strike rather than ship cattle to England ? But the stokers in Liverpool had *their* nation behind them, and its armed forces if necessary. Would the armed forces which recognise the Irish nation be behind the Irish docker if he took such action ? Would they ? Ah, that makes the differ-

* *Workers' Republic*, March 25th, 1916.

ence ? " The incident, it may be recalled, evoked a famous and trenchant letter of protest from the late Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, the redoubtable Catholic Bishop of Limerick.

In an eloquent eulogy, of Keir Hardie,* Connolly mourned the loss of a fearless and incorruptible champion of Labour, as well as a pure and high-minded soul, recalling how staunchly this British Labour leader had stood by the Dublin workers in 1913 from first to last.

" Keir Hardie," he wrote, " was to the Labour movement a prophetic anticipation of its own possibilities. He was a worker, with all the limitations from which no worker ever completely escapes, and with potentialities, such as few workers ever aspire after, but of which each worker may be the embodiment.

" Keir . . . was a living proof that Labour could furnish in its own ranks all that was needed to achieve its emancipation. . . . And when the last great iniquity was being rushed upon the world, and the contending hosts of Europe were being marshalled by their masters for the work of murder, Keir stood resolutely for peace and brotherhood among the nations—refusing to sanction the claims of the capitalist class of any nation to be the voice of the best interests of that nation."

Connolly, indeed, in a sense was " a star, and dwelt apart." Some English reader, chancing upon stray quotations in this volume, might conceivably dub him jingo or pro-German, and protest that he too would not forget he was an Englishman, with memories of stubborn struggle and sacrifice in the recent war, where millions of his countrymen were killed and maimed for an ideal, perhaps sacred, perhaps elusive, but on a scale infinitely more vast as prolonged, as stubborn withal, as even the five years' guerrilla war in which Connolly fired the opening shots. And he might recall, pointedly, that, whatever devilries his Government loosed upon Ireland, the vast masses of the English people were in ignorance, while from the first an enlightened

* *Workers' Republic*, October 2nd, 1915.

if small minority, protested to rouse their fellows from uneasy conscience to willing acquiescence in the first large steps towards the full achievement of Ireland's claims for national freedom.

All this Connolly knew too well, and as one ponders, it is not his occasional prejudices that are astonishing, but the balance he invariably maintained between mother earth and fatherland in a country where temptations to jingoism and national self-satisfaction were, until quite lately, irresistible !

Even at Christmas 1915, when he was clamouring for action, he could not applaud the words of P. H. Pearse, who cried that policy guided the Governments, but patriotism the peoples, that Belgium and Turkey alike were heroic, and that " the old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. Such august homage was never offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country," even when Pearse made haste to add that war was not more terrible than the evils it ended, or might help to end : exploitation of English worker, enslavement of Ireland or Poland perchance. " No ! " cried Connolly bitterly, " we are sick, and the world is sick of this teaching ! " To him the trumpets of battle sounded the knell of the best hopes of mankind. Sometimes, war might be forced upon a subject class or nation when it should be waged remorsely, but without any illusions as to its debasing effects.

Hailing his Separatist and Republican friends * as the " real Nationalists of Ireland," and recognising in P. H. Pearse especially a quality above the average of Irish political leaders of the time to the end, James Connolly remained unrepentantly Internationalist.

Aye, well both knew, even as they grasped the sword and sank in physical death and defeat, that war betimes is righteous and unavoidable, but that ever : " Lovely is the coming of Christ's peace, beautiful are its feet on the

* " Labour in Irish History," p. 202.

mountains." Neither Pearse nor Connolly was an apostle of anarchy however militant their spirits or martial the paths their times compelled them to tread. One might almost say some fate compelled them to do violence to their own natures, in grasping revolver and donning the warlike green in their last days.

One left, not without regrets, the spacious educational developments he had planned, after a coming American visit would have cleared St. Enda's of the last penny of debt, the other hoped against hope for gleams of sanity in a mad and fevered world, both saw cherished hopes fading, both came to believe that " deep in the heart of Ireland has sunk the degradation wrought upon its people—our lost brothers and sisters—so deep and humiliating that no agency less potent than the red tide of war on Irish soil will ever be able to enable the Irish race to recover its self-respect or establish its national dignity in the face of a world, horrified and scandalised, by what must seem to them, our national apostasy. Without the slightest trace of irreverence, but in all due humility, that of us as of mankind before Calvary, it may be truly said, ' Without the shedding of blood there is no redemption ! ' " *

And neither Pearse nor Connolly was of the mould or in the mood to go down without fighting. Both felt their arming and incitements to others had committed them to action, that if the European War passed over an Ireland, so quiet, that she could be represented as a loyal and quiescent province of England, Irish Nationalism would sink to the political status and value of some Scottish Jacobite legend.

Connolly urged that the opportunity must not pass, and that, if necessary, a start should be made with even the small war chest, the few thousand rifles, shot guns and bombs, the potential insurgent forces possessed. Pearse was not exactly at one with Connolly there, but as to the wisdom of striking he was. " If I quote Connolly's lines to him," he said—

* *Workers' Republic*, February 5th, 1916.

'To watch and wait thro' galling years, the ripening of time,
But deem to strike before that hour worse were than folly
—crime!'—

"Connolly will retort that now is the time—and he will be right!"

So these two men watched eagerly a slowly ripening mental revolution in the country. "Slowly, gradually, but persistently, the forces standing for the social and national freedom of Ireland won the people back to greater sanity and greater visions. Despite imprisonment; despite persecution; despite suppression of newspapers; despite avalanches of carefully framed lies, the truth made headway throughout the country. The people saw, clearer and clearer, that nothing had changed in Ireland; that Ireland was still denied every prerogative that makes for true nationhood; that her interests were still subject to the interests of a rival country; that the Home Rule Act expressly declared the subjection of Ireland as permanent; that the Redmond-Devlin party had sold the birthright of their country; in return for the valueless promise of a Government that did not even keep faith with its own countrymen and countrywomen; that the British Empire and the freedom or prosperity of the Irish people were two things that could not exist together in Ireland, and that, therefore, one or the other must for ever and utterly perish . . . despite all the treasons of all the traitors, Ireland still remains as pure in heart as ever and though Empires fall and tyrannies perish: We will rise again!" *

To stress a more peaceful aspect: "Deeds of these men's thoughts" have marched on slowly, in the Ireland of to-day, for it would be possible to burn all their political and more militant writings, and leave a respectable remainder—Pearse as playwright, poet, editor of Gaelic texts, educationalist; Connolly as historian, social student, or planner, and herald of a new order. But, in the absence of melodrama, three-quarters of their life works and service,

* *Workers' Republic*, March 25th, 1916.

in calmer and more humdrum ways, have been obscured by a five days' fires, tragedies, and splendour.

How would Pearse and Connolly have regarded the present Irish Free State and recent happenings, one wonders betimes ? True, the Irregulars and other Republicans can quote a thousand passages with comparative ease, and claim a large share of inspiration from either, but the matter can, assuredly, not so easily be disposed of by appeals to past utterances and ultimate aims. Connolly and Pearse would undoubtedly have loathed the senseless Civil War and striven for reconciliation, as the saner if weaker elements, in both camps, have done from the first; they would have loathed the permanent partition of Ireland, and scarcely have waged a war against the active will of so large a proportion of the Irish people. One has perforce to recall Connolly's consistent appeal to use every institution peacefully, if possible, to attain national and social freedom ultimately; his attitude towards Home Rule in 1914; his forward policy for the Volunteers in the same year; Colonial Home Rule as a national minimum programme—while theoretical scruples as regards oaths of allegiance would, certainly, never have troubled him.

It may be argued that Mr. De Valera, his party, and their armed followers have much in common with the militant spirit of Pearse and Connolly, alike in their clear-cut Republicanism, and in the insistence of the best of them that they seek a lasting settlement upon the basis of Irish independence, in the interests of a true understanding between the peoples of Britain and Ireland, irrespective of the political fortunes of British party politicians. And there is weight in that argument.

Vividly and appropriately enough, in this connection, recurs to the present writer's mind a conversation that he had with Pearse in the early part of 1916.* I quoted to him the opinion that Republicans, who rose in revolt and met with a fair measure of initial success, would be foolish to refuse a settlement on the basis of Colonial Home Rule

* Mentioned briefly in "The Man Called Pearse," p. 14.

from a British Government. Deliberately and thoughtfully Pearse replied : " That is a question of peace terms. It is not a dishonourable proposal, but, personally, had I ever any voice in accepting or rejecting it, I would vote against it." Towards Connolly's " forward policy " for the Irish Volunteers before mentioned, he maintained a similar tolerant attitude of opposition.

Subsequently, it is true, Pearse raised a white flag to save his followers' lives and the lives of Dublin citizens, but in the hour of his defeat, he believed firmly that his countrymen and countrywomen, then hostile, would yet appreciate his motives and make his dream of a free and Gaelic Ireland come true. However jealous one may be of the damage slavish and parrot homage may do the dead, one can well appreciate, without wholly sharing, the passionate insistence with which many Anti-Treaty Irish Republicans claim Pearse as an inspiration and as a guide.

Still, as one considers Pearse's or Connolly's conduct, in various public crises, one may well be excused for entertaining serious doubts. Pearse, in the popular imagination, has been justly fixed as the ideal leader of the forlorn hope, the inevitable martyr of an active minority. Prepared to lead a revolt of the Irish Volunteers against Mr. Redmond's autocratic intrusion into that organisation's affairs, long before he did so, he accepted the latter's nominees, although he had personally voted against them.

Pearse, too, alone in his day, had pleaded for the Irish Councils Bill, and even regarded it as a possible Republican attitude to take an oath, binding whilst there, at Westminster itself, should Irish interests demand that. Nor did he ever apologise for these ideas, even at the very last. And he held that Parnell alive in Redmond's place during the European War would have wrung a large measure of political freedom from Great Britain, and mayhap not have rested contented there.

Vain are such conjectures and questionings as to the dead, safe from party label, and secure in accomplishment, so we may take what solace we may in conjecture and in

our own personal opinions. Certainly, in recent days, many have yearned for a touch of the iron, the eloquence, the great heartedness of Pearse and Connolly in the ranks of their followers, lately at each other's throats, more fiercely than at the throats of their recent enemies, occasionally, mayhap, feeling some touch or flash so hoped for, and rejoiced thereat for the short length it lasted.

In another important phase of Connolly's life, Pearse played an important part: his final reconciliation with the Catholic Church—for Connolly for many years had been an agnostic, though never avowedly or blatantly so. While both awaited execution, Pearse communicated with Connolly, and appealed to him to receive the last rites of the Church. He was informed that Connolly had already determined to do so. Doubts have been expressed by even clerical and other hostile critics of Connolly's economic and political ideals, as to his sincerity in this, but such scepticism reveals a strange ignorance of one who had grown more and more inclined to value sentiment and the unknown element in human destiny, and who was the last in the world to be temperamentally tempted to window-dress, for party purposes, on the brink of eternity. But slander hung round Connolly in his hospital bed, and was scarcely buried in his quick-lime pit of a grave. As with Roger Casement or Erskine Childers, so too with Connolly, only death itself availed to silence the calumniators, who believed these men to be agents of the British Secret Service:

> Him shall the wrath and scorn of men
> Pursue with deadly aim;
> And malice, envy, spite and lies
> Shall desecrate his name!

In his article in the Rossa Memorial Souvenir volume, "Why the Citizen Army Honours Rossa," * Connolly

* The Irish Citizen Army, as before noted, arose out of the Dublin 1913 strike. In April, 1916, its roll numbered 270, of which 118 men participated in the insurrection. Connolly was never as hostile to the Irish Volunteers as other members of the Citizen Army, but as to the necessity of an independent armed labour organisation he was at one with them.

wrote: "The Irish Citizen Army, in its constitution, pledges its members to fight for a Republican freedom for Ireland. Its members are of the number who believe that, at the call of duty, they may have to lay down their lives for Ireland, and have so trained themselves that, at the worst, the laying down of their lives shall constitute the starting point of another glorious tradition—a tradition that will keep alive the soul of the nation." The famous funeral of the dead Fenian gave rise to two remarkable articles from the same pen in the *Workers' Republic*,—July 31st—August 7th, 1915.

Fenianism, was to Connolly, "that revolutionary movement the least aristocratic and most plebeian which ever raised itself to national dignity in Ireland. It was a movement that, resting on the masses of the people in Ireland and drawing its inspiration from the hearts of the Irish people, was successful in inspiring its followers with such a belief in their own ability to conquer and master the future that it nerved them to conspire for a revolt against the British Empire when that Empire was at peace with all the world." And he dwells on the heroism of the men and women who with the awful horrors of '47 and inglorious '48 in their minds, yet rose to the spiritual level of challenging English power. "They were giants in those days!" he cries. "Are we pigmies in these?" Declaring Ireland to be now a geographical expression in Europe, he continues the parallel between 1867 and 1915: "For the year proceeding the Rossa funeral the conditions of Ireland were entirely different. The cause of Ireland as a separate nation, as a nation with a separate life, history and individuality of its own, was again looked upon as a lost cause, and the fate of Ireland was again accepted as being irrevocably and finally blended with that of the British Empire. But, unlike the days of '48, the days of the past twelve months were remarkable for the abandonment of the cause of Ireland as a separate nationality, the merging of the hopes of Ireland in the success of England, the definite declaration that the British Empire could count Ireland as finally

conquered and made 'loyal'—all this came not from without, but from within, not imposed upon us in the hour of our weakness, but from within and accepted in the hour of our greatest tactical strength by the leaders trusted by the majority of our people."

"For twelve months, twelve dreary agonising months, we have seen war in Ireland, war upon the soul of Ireland, war upon the traditions, the religious spirit, the centuried hopes of the martyred men and women who had made Ireland famed and respected wherever there are gathered men and women capable of long fortitude in disaster and sublimity of soul in the midst of defeat. Never has a nation suffered such an onslaught. Belgium in its agonies under the heel of the invaders, nor Poland in its awful travail, cannot claim to have suffered as Ireland has suffered since war was declared."

"Betrayed and deserted by all but a faithful few, Ireland was attacked by every poisonous agency ever brought to bear upon the mind and soul of a people. Her religion, her love of nationality, her strict sexual morality, her natural affection for the weak, her sympathy for suffering and distress—every high and noble instinct, implanted in her by ages of suffering, was appealed to that her children might deny the past of their country, and surrender their hopes of moulding its future. Ireland was asked, nay, was ordered, to deny all that her martyrs had affirmed, to affirm all that her martyrs had denied. And this assault upon the soul of Ireland was planned and carried out in all its minutest and revolting details by the men whom a cruel fate had allowed to become the leaders and guides of Irish public opinion. The fighting in Belgium and in Poland was for the material possession of town and cities, the fight in Ireland has been one for the soul of the race—that Irish race which with the centuries of defeat behind it, still battled for the sanctity of its dwelling-place."

"Old mediæval legends tell us how in the critical moments of the struggle of an army or the travail of a nation, some angel or deliverer was sent from above to save those favoured

by the Most High. To many people to-day it seems that the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa came to Ireland in such a moment of national agony."

And when Pearse, apostle of a blood sacrifice to rouse a people, cried that Providence was with him, that he, Thomas MacDonagh and his comrades were possessed of intuition, imagination and foresight their moderate opponents underestimated, there came this answering note of approval from Connolly who distrusted emotions as a guide * :

" The revolutionists of the past have ever been adventurous, else they would never have been revolutionists. . . . The spirit of calculation, which is the very essence of a good merchant, is the destruction of a good revolutionist. For no matter how carefully you plan ; how wisely you arrange your course of action ; how astutely you have everything thought out ; how admirably every contingency is provided against, there is always for the revolutionist the knowledge that a sudden move of the enemy may set all your schemes at nought and force action along lines never dreamed of by your wisest heads. In such a contingency, the swiftest thought must be followed by the swiftest action—the spirit of adventure then becomes the greatest revolutionary asset."

" Perhaps it was time for an insurrection, perhaps it was long overdue," said a hostile Irish critic of the venture after its collapse. Against the active opposition of the then political guides of the Irish people and the only slowly ripening approval of the mass of the people, Pearse and Connolly, with a thousand followers behind them, marched out.

Undoubtedly Pearse's deep Gaelicism influenced Connolly to some degree, and mayhap left its traces upon his later writings, notably " The Reconquest of Ireland," a book which, with " Labour in Irish History," and Fintan Lalor's writings, left an indelible mark upon Pearse's own " Sovereign People," but the comradeship of these two men was a comradeship of disillusion as much as a comradeship of

* *Workers' Republic*, February 19th, 1916.

aspiration. Both were embittered, horrified, depressed and stung to militant action by the War's reactions on Ireland, by the works of a lifetime apparently perishing in an Imperialist holiday, by national apostasy, by a mood in which love for the Irish people, and most good causes mingled with a profound and proud despair.

Nor yet was their mood one devoid of high hope and vision at the last. No, Pearse's noble lines sum up the faith in which they marched out :

> Beware of the thing that is coming ! Beware of the risen people
> Who will take what you would not give !
> Fools, did you think to conquer the people ?
> Or that Law is stronger than Life or than Man's desire to be free ?
> We will try it out with you, ye that have harried and held !
> Ye that have bullied and bribed ! Tyrants, hypocrites, liars !

CHAPTER VII

CONNOLLY'S LAST FIGHT

Aye! we who oft won by our valour,
Empire for our Rulers and Lords,
Yet knelt in abasement and squalor,
To the thing we had made by our swords.

Now, valour with worth will be blending,
When answering Labour's command,
We arise from our knees, and ascending
To manhood, for Freedom take stand.

Then send it aloft on the breeze, boys!
That watchword, the grandest we've known,
That Labour must rise from its knees, boys!
And claim the broad earth as its own.*

Why did James Connolly take part in the insurrection of 1916, he, whose "Labour in Irish History" is one of the most damaging criticisms of mere insurrectionism imaginable,† whose outlook, until August, 1914, was the orthodox Marxian outlook, notoriously hostile to violent methods, whose temperament was, apparently, cold-blooded and realist?

Thousands of his fellow countrymen, more dubious about his Socialist and Labour activities than about his leading part in forcing the Irish Volunteers into action in 1916, have not yet found a satisfactory answer to the question. Indeed, the opinion is still freely expressed in country parts of Ireland, that "it was a pity Connolly and the Liberty Hall crowd ever had anything to do with the Rising."

One recalls the old friction which revealed itself, so

* "Songs of Freedom," by James Connolly.
† "Labour in Irish History," 1910, pp. 6, 209.

plainly, between the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, in the early stages of both movements, and the further question arises: was there an economic question at issue or a "proletarian background" to the revolt?

Alike to friendly critics among his own followers, who believe of Connolly that "the high creed of Irish nationalism became his daily rosary, while the higher creed of international humanity that had so long bubbled from his eloquent lips was silent for ever," * alike to equally sympathetic critics among the essentially moderate and pacific masses of British Labour—little attracted by Red Flags or Soviets, and suspicious of violent methods—the reasons, motives and hopes which inspired James Connolly's last fight remain an obscure and glorious enigma. "His was a nature too big, and too far in advance of his day, for any but intimate friends to understand." Cathal O'Shannon, a close friend, has told the present writer: "He was too great for party politicians to understand, or the thoroughly comfortable. Connolly loved to disturb both, and they have never forgiven him."

Small wonder, then, that Labourites, Socialists and Republicans still ponder, at the back of their minds, whether a pacifist, suddenly unbalanced by despair, became a dynamitard, whether he should not have rather acted as a check upon the activists than as a chief inciter to an appeal to arms, and, above all, whether he really entertained hopes of material success in so desperate a venture. I hope in what follows to answer these pertinent questions, and correct certain misconceptions.

True, since his death, Lenin and the Russian Revolution have arrived to adjust the balance somewhat. His last words to his daughter, whilst under sentence of death in Dublin Castle,† are enlightening and no platitude or recanta-

* "History of the Irish Citizen Army," by Sean O'Cathasaigh (Casey) (Maunsel and Roberts, Dublin).

† *Voice of Labour*, May 10th, 1919: "James Connolly, Revolutionist," by Nora Connolly (now Mrs. Connolly O'Brien, whose book, widely circulated in America, "The Unbroken Tradition," is a vivid and moving apologia of the 1916 insurrection).

tion of his Internationalist faith: "The Socialists will never understand why I am here. They will all forget that I am an Irishman." His words elsewhere * may fall on more understanding ears:

"The Irish working class sees no abandonment of the principles of the Labour movement in this fight against this war and all it implies; sees no weakening of international solidarity in their fierce resolve to do no fighting except it be in their own country, to secure the right to hold that country for its own sons and daughters. Rather do they joy in giving this proof that the principles of the Labour movement represent the highest form of patriotism, and that true patriotism will embody the broadest principles of Labour and Socialism. The Labour movement in Ireland stands for the ownership of all Ireland by the Irish; it therefore fights against all things calculated to weaken the hold of the Irish upon Ireland, as it fights for all things calculated to strengthen the grasp of the Irish people upon Ireland and all things Irish."

"The Irish working class, as a class, can only hope to rise with Ireland."

"Equally true is it that Ireland cannot rise to freedom except upon the shoulders of a working class knowing its rights and daring to take them."

Even yet, however, the circumstances which confronted Connolly when the European War drove him into the company of P. H. Pearse, Thomas J. Clarke, and Sean MacDermott, are not fully appreciated. We have seen how generous, full and discerning was his understanding of that intangible but definite fact: nationality. We know—as we have already noted in his American writings—that he recognised that deep sentiment in Irish men and women sprang from historical causes, pre-natal and post-natal influences and actual necessities of Irish life. In that cry of agony just quoted, Connolly implied what he often stated during the course of the War: the Socialists had forgotten that they were Socialists, and even those who had

* *Irish Worker*, October 31st, 1914.

not lacked the power to make effective the logical protest which should have followed the outbreak of hostilities.

But the wicked Germans, not then oppressed by M. Poincaré, overshadowed the Brotherhood of Man in the minds of many British Pacifists and Socialists, who had smiled in happier days, at the Nationalist and old-fashioned prejudices which obsessed the Irish workers. The beast in man emerged, the old corruption in the human heart, and all over Europe the humanitarians howled for blood. James Connolly smiled sadly, murmuring in bitterness: "Good Lord! Such changes." In no country, however, not even in France, Connolly believed, did organised Labour * possess the complete and effective control of transport and industry sufficient to back any protest at the polls. The International went down in blood and wounds and death and slaughter.

Bitter and melancholy were Connolly's reflections in that awful hour. "Alas! that I should live to see it! † North, south, east and west, the Irish Volunteers are marching and parading with the Union Jack in front of them, the bands playing 'God Save the King,' and their aristocratic officers making loyalist speeches. . . . We have reached the lowest depths as a race." Redmond's famous speech in the British House of Commons which made Ireland "the one bright spot" to Sir Edward Grey, drew from Connolly a fierce protest, "Our duty in this crisis." ‡ He then declared his views upon the War, "that crime of the centuries," most unequivocally as he also did, in the Glasgow Labour weekly *Forward*—voicing a grim and severe criticism, not only of Redmond, but of the Republican Party. Redmond's announcement, that the British Government could now withdraw its garrisons from Ireland, said Connolly with passion, had won him the plaudits of the bitterest enemies of the Irish race: in effect, Irish slaves had guaranteed to

* "Revolutionary Unionism and the War," *International Socialist Review*, Chicago, September, 1915.

† *Irish Worker*, August 15th, 1914.

‡ *Ibid.*, August 8th, 1914.

protect the Irish estate of England until their masters came back to take possession. At last, Ireland had accepted as permanent the status of a British province. No inspiration could be derived from that source!

The Republicans were, in turn, denounced as having "neither a policy nor a leader." The critic waxes very sarcastic at the expense of their "blatant campaign in favour of the German war lord," * which, "since the guns did begin to speak in reality, has died out in whispers, whilst without a protest the manhood of Ireland was pledged to armed warfare against the very power our advanced Nationalist friends have wasted so much good ink in acclaiming." His invective is more bitter still against a similar pro-Russian campaign the same group of Irish Nationalists had conducted in America before 1906. Equally severe were his comments on the semi-serious approval of the Carsonites the Republicans adopted. In this he was unjust, because the Republicans had their tongues in their cheeks.

Connolly's attitude towards the War was never better expressed than in his famous streamer outside Liberty Hall: "We serve neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland." He never had any illusions about the German Government, and in conversation with P. H. Pearse once said: "The Germans are as bad as the English. We must do the job ourselves."

Not unjustly has a leading British Communist, Arthur MacManus, described James Connolly † as the one Socialist that he had ever met who judged every public situation or political crisis with an eye upon revolutionary possibilities. So now, especially, when he looked for allies, in a mood of iron despair. Larkin's departure for America in October,

* Later Connolly wrote in the *Workers' Republic*, November 6th, 1915: "The pretext for this war (Belgium) is a real humiliation for German diplomacy, as real as the war itself is a triumph for German arms. German arms will win this war, but we would not be surprised to see British diplomacy pluck the fruits of victory from military defeat."

† *Socialist*, Edinburgh, April 17th, 1919.

1914,* left him in charge of the Irish Transport Union, the Citizen Army and the *Irish Worker*.

Towards a union of national and labour forces for that armed outbreak he had, as many remarks in public and private go to show, determined upon, Connolly bent every effort. "The time is now ripe,† nay, the imperious necessities of the hour call loudly for, demand the formation of a committee of all the elements outside, as well as inside the Volunteers, to consider means to take and hold Ireland, and the food of Ireland, for the people of Ireland. We of the Transport Union, we of the Citizen Army, are ready for any such co-operation. We can bring to it the aid of drilled and trained men; we can bring to it the heartiest efforts of men and women who in thousands have shown that they know how to face prison and death; and we can bring to it the services of thinkers and organisers who know that different occasions require different policies—that you cannot legalise revolutionary actions and that audacity alone can command success in a crisis like this."

About this time, James Connolly confessed, in conversation with a well-known Scottish Socialist, afterwards famous for his activities on the Clyde, that his Internationalist faith remained unshaken, and that he would welcome, and co-operate in any concerted move of the world's workers against the War. "But I may well go down in this sea!" he added, sadly but grimly. When his friend humorously suggested that Scotland ought to resent and revive certain centuried feuds with Ireland, James Connolly frowned somewhat.

Connolly soon found able allies in Thomas J. Clarke, Sean MacDermott and P. H. Pearse, who were as determined as himself that the War should not pass without an armed uprising in Ireland, were it but a street riot. Pearse had dreamed, and sworn an oath in his childhood to die in arms for Ireland. The dream of arms had haunted him ever. An Irish revolution had been one of his ambitions. The

* See Larkin's farewell message, *Irish Worker*, October 24th, 1914.
† *Irish Worker*, August 15th, 1914.

Irish Volunteers which arose in 1913, were, to him, as long-cherished ideas come down to earth and armed. "There will be," he wrote in November, 1913,* "in the Ireland of the next few years a multitudinous activity of freedom clubs, Young Republican parties, Labour organisations, Socialist groups and what not; bewildering enterprises undertaken by sane persons and insane persons, by good men and bad men, many of them, seemingly contradictory, some mutually destructive, yet all tending towards a common objective, and that objective: the Irish Revolution. . . . Whether Home Rule means a loosening of England's grip on Ireland, remains to be seen. But the coming of Home Rule, if come it does, makes no material difference in the nature of the work that lies before us: it will only affect the means we are to employ, our plan of campaign. . . . I am glad that the Orangemen have armed, for it is a goodly thing to see arms in Irish hands. I should like to see the A.O.H. armed. I should like to see the Transport Workers armed. I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms. We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them."

Michael Collins, who reorganised the Irish Republican Army after the collapse of 1916, and who translated the philosophy of the foregoing extract into the practice of the most amazing guerilla war in history, was wont to quote portions thereof with enthusiasm. He once described Thomas J. Clarke and Sean MacDermott as the architects of the Irish Revolution. Thomas J. Clarke had spent some sixteen years in British prisons, and with Sean MacDermott and P. H. Pearse was undoubtedly high in the counsels of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the driving force behind the Irish Volunteers and the Insurrection. There is no

* "Political Writings of P. H. Pearse," pp. 94, 96, 99.

reason to doubt that James Connolly,* also, though long opposed to secret societies, was in close touch with, if not actually a member of, that romantic and mysterious body, but his relations with all Nationalist organisations were at all times critical, and often severely and critically neutral.

The Irish Volunteers, who adhered to Professor Eoin MacNeill, P. H. Pearse and other leaders after the expulsion of Mr. Redmond's nominees from their Provisional Committee in October, 1914, following Mr. Redmond's Woodenbridge speech, where he urged the Volunteers, as such, to join the British Army, were hailed by Connolly as allies. He described the expulsion as "a Napoleon-like stroke which had saved the situation," and cried prophetically: † "For some of us, the finish may be on the scaffold, for some in the prison cell, for others more fortunate upon the battlefields of an Ireland in arms for a real Republican liberty. We bespeak for the Provisional Committee the support of all ready to face whatever that fight may entail, in the determination that we shall show the world that, though Redmond may sell Ireland, he cannot deliver the goods!"

Week by week, Connolly urged, as did Larkin, too, at the time, a forward policy for the Irish Volunteers which would pledge them to Ireland alone, and an agitation for the repeal of all clauses in the Home Rule Bill, which denied to Ireland the powers of self-government, enjoyed by Australia, South Africa and Canada. This programme ‡ was defined as "the very minimum of a national programme," which would throw upon opponents the onus of defending things, morally and politically indefensible.

Redmond's hostility to Roger Casement in these days, and to James Connolly was implacable, and, in the latter's case certainly, the feeling was returned with a generous interest.

We may glance a year ahead and give Connolly's detailed

* See "Terence MacSwiney, A Memoir," by P. S. O'Hegarty (The Talbot Press, Dublin).

† *Irish Worker*, October 3rd, 1914.

‡ *Ibid.*, October 10th and 17th, 1914. For Larkin's views see *Irish Worker*, September 5th, 1914: "An Appeal in this Crisis."

criticism of the Irish Parliamentary Party. He never forgave even the more democratic Mr. Joseph Devlin, idol of many Belfast workers, for the latter's recruiting activities in Belfast, observing mordantly : " I think things D.O.R.A. will not permit me to print. I can't ride up the Falls Road in my motor-car, the penny tram has to do for me, but, thank God, there are no fresh-made graves in Flanders or the Dardanelles, filled by the mangled corpses of men whom I coaxed or bullied into leaving their homes and families." * He detested Mr. Devlin's Ancient Order of Hibernians, while he described another now less popular light of the same organisation " as a recruiting sergeant, luring to their doom men who trusted and voted him into power."

To the very last he repeated that " Redmond would never deliver the goods." He always contended that the rights the Irish people had gained in the previous forty years were gained by their own efforts at home and not by the oratory of the Irish Parliamentary Party. A political party was only one and not the most important weapon.

" The politicians as a result of their forty years' babbling in the wilderness of Westminster † can only record their failure to secure what to them was the breath of their nostrils, whereas the Irish people, fighting in Ireland upon the battleground of their farms, leagues and trades unions, have compelled an unwilling legislature to pass measure after measure enacting as law that which the power of the people had already won as rights. The extent of our indebtedness to the Home Rule Party can be gauged by measuring the relative achievements of the people who fought and won the fight on the Land question—a fight fought and won outside Parliament—and the people who fought and lost the battle of Home Rule—a purely parliamentary battle."

" The people met all the combined forces of landlordism and the British Crown, broke up the social system they had imposed upon the agricultural population, and tore a

* *Workers' Republic*, June 12, 1915.
† *Ibid.*, September 4th, 1915.

measure of social freedom and economic security from their reluctant grasp. The Irish Parliamentarians met the British politicians upon their own chosen ground of battle, and lost every move of the game."

"Every time the astute British politicians called for a sacrifice, that party yielded the point and sacrificed their principles. They yielded to sacrifice Ulster and divided their country; they yielded the control of taxation; they yielded control over the Post Office, Customs and Excise; in short, they yielded everything which gives life and power to a nation, and finally, when their greatest opportunity came, in the breath of war, they yielded up countless thousands of lives of their trusting fellow countrymen, and, in return, they achieved NOTHING. Home Rule, pitiful abortion as it is, is hung up, and side by side with the law suspending it, is framed the declaration that it would be unthinkable to force Home Rule on Orange Ulster."

Early in September, 1914, at the first and final meeting of the Irish Neutrality League, in the Antient Concert Rooms, Dublin, James Connolly, who addressed the gathering in company with Arthur Griffith and Major John MacBride, declared that Redmond's speech at Westminster on the outbreak of war, had caused "me, though naturally unemotional, and cold-blooded, to weep tears of inward anguish." He then outlined the honourable and practical course for the Irish people, whose freedom had been destroyed, and who had not been consulted about the War, to remain neutral until the intentions of the warring powers became clearer. If the fortunes of war brought a German army to Ireland, which offered guarantees to establish Irish independence, then, and only then, the Irish people should support that army. And he concluded with an appeal to his listeners to wear the Orange, White and Green, the first occasion an attempt was made to bring the Republican colours to public notice and favour. Thus, when sardonically and absolutely neutral, Connolly characteristically popularised a by no means neutral standard.

As he watched the men of his union, reservists or others,

impelled by hunger or economic conscription, march away to battle, bitterness and despair possessed him. Pending an attempt at social revolution in Europe, or a German landing, he called aloud for neutrality. He strove to prepare the Irish people for revolutionary action within Ireland—to hold the food and stave off an artificial famine. Ireland normally could feed herself, but the new circumstances in England might conceivably mean the training of food across to feed her Army, Navy and jingoes, a temptation to farmers' pockets.

Famine prices, perchance famine and its attendant horrors, would rule in the land. A struggle to hold the food might mean more than a transport strike, possibly armed battling in the streets, but whatever it meant the consequences must be not shirked: "Starting thus," we find him writing,* "Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture are shrivelled up on the funeral pyre of the last war lord."

The *Irish Worker* Connolly edited from October 24th, 1914, to December 5th following, when it appeared with blanks, an editorial which the printers feared would lead to seizure of their presses, being distributed through the city as a hand bill. In its place, the paper's columns bore the defiantly ironic words: "We will now rejoice, Home Rule is on the Statute Book, martial law is now in force, and free expression of opinion is forbidden." The *Irish Worker* was then suppressed, but reappeared early in 1915 as the *Workers' Republic*, when Connolly's old comrades in Glasgow of the Socialist Labour Party agreed to print it.

Our view of Connolly's mind, during these early 1914 days, grows more and more clear, as we study his writings, often excellent polemics, always vigorous, and often illuminative of the trend of the stirring times.

In reply to a question at a gathering of Irish Volunteer officers where he had lectured on street fighting, Connolly said, "How do I know so much of military and revolu-

* *Irish Worker*, August 8th, 1914.

tionary matters ? " Then laughingly : " You forget that my business is Revolution." Because although revolution to him was essentially Change,* few readers of his writings would expect him to be surprised at the attacks of capitalist governments on Soviet Russia or the Russian Red Army. Appropriately enough, a series of articles on street fighting generally occupied the back pages of the *Workers' Republic*, 1915–16, and a foremost place in the editor's thoughts. Insatiable was his thirst for revolutionary lore, in the popular sense of the term.

And wide as his repertoire of freedom's songs in every clime and age, his knowledge of armed uprisings—national, political and social. " Rat-traps," men of experience have called the General Post Office, St. Stephen's Green, and Connolly's other fortresses of 1916, but, however the romance of '98, and ideas of house to house combats borrowed from Mexico may have swayed him, the moral of John Brown's body was never lost on him. For, as a rule, it is from unsuccessful revolts he looks for guidance. Where in the earlier *Workers' Republic* songs predominated, now, the exploits of Moscow, 1905, Paris, 1830–48, Lexington, the Tyrol Insurrection, Mexico, guerilla warfare in India, occupied the place of honour.

These sketches were intended for " those who desire to acquire a knowledge of how brave men and women have in other times, and in other places overcome difficulties and achieved something for a cause held to be sacred." Frequently, he lays down the principle that military text-books must give place to the insurrectionary tactics of barricades in the streets of cities and guerilla warfare in the country. Connolly's perusals of John Mitchel's " United Irishman " and Lalor's " Irish Felon " in the Dublin National Library, lighted up for him much else besides social ideas. He did not only follow them there or Mitchel's unfailing habit of

* Besides " Labour in Irish History," " Socialism Made Easy," etc. an early lecture afterwards republished in *The Voice of Labour*, " Irish Revolutions—Utopian and Scientific " (1897), clearly shows this.

chronicling the progress of the then popular Chartist cause in Great Britain ; no, but as we have seen.

It must not be supposed that the British military authorities regarded Liberty Hall with neutral or benevolent eyes. General Friend, then competent military authority in Ireland, removed Connolly's famous, " We serve neither King nor Kaiser " poster by main force. " Had I five thousand armed men," said James, " the General's task would not have been so easy ! " Upon several occasions it is reported upon good authority, the General contemplated a swoop upon James' fortress with large forces backed by machine-guns. It was believed that the personal intervention of Mr. Birrell, then Chief Secretary, once actually averted such a swoop, which would have led to serious bloodshed and set Dublin ablaze.

" We serve neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland ! "—the words illuminate all Connolly's thought upon the Great War. What was his attitude to the widespread propaganda in favour of the Allies' cause in the War ? Towards the propaganda of the Irish daily Press against German militarism and most things German, from the Kaiser to Professor Kuno Meyer, Connolly, of course, preserved a sceptical and contemptuous attitude. " The Home Rule Press," he wrote savagely,* " is but a sewer pipe for the pouring of English filth upon the shores of Ireland ! " " Don't let any one," he wrote again, " play upon your sympathies by denunciations of the German military bullies. German military bullies, like all tyrants among civilised peoples, need fear nothing so much as native (German) democracy. Attacks from outside only strengthen tyrants within a nation. If we had to choose between strengthening the German bully or the Russian autocrat, the wise choice would be on the side of the German. For the German people are a highly civilised people, responsive to every progressive influence, and rapidly forging weapons for their own emancipation, whereas the Russian Empire stretches away into the depths of Asia and relies upon an army, largely

* *Irish Worker*, September 12th, 1914.

recruited from amongst many thousands of barbarians, who have not yet felt the first softening influence of civilisation. German influences have shaped for good the hopes of the world, but the thoughts and hopes of the best in Russia were, but the other day, drowned in blood by Russia's worst."

"To help Britain is to help Russia to the dominance of Europe, to help the barbarian to crush the scientist. That is the reflection of the wise revolutionist of to-day."

"Meanwhile, the Orange enemy of Irish freedom wisely stays at home, and conserves his forces, and the Irish Nationalist is encouraged by his leaders to rush abroad and shed his blood in a quarrel not his own, the simplest elements, of which he does not understand." * In the following issue, Connolly declares that the War is directed by Britain against Germany's rapidly growing industrial supremacy. "Yes!" he cries, "this war is the war of a pirate upon the German nation." †

Towards the recruiting campaign his hostility was relentless. Recalling pre-war anti-Irish speeches, the Curragh revolt and the Carsonite campaign, he describes Unionist recruiters as "snivelling, hypocritical, dastardly bullies." And as to their victims: "Let the dupes go! There will be more room for the good men who remain behind. Would it not be better for all capable of bearing arms to resolve to fight, and, if need be, to die for freedom here at home, rather than for the benefit of kings and capitalists abroad."

Again he writes on ‡ "Some Perverted Battle Lines": "Nothing is more remarkable in this War than the manner in which the ruling class in the countries of the Triple Alliance have appropriated, and used for their own purposes, every phrase and rallying cry that their political opponents had used against them." Connolly refers to "anti-militarism" and "the defence of small nationalities,"

* *Irish Worker*, August 22nd, 1914.
† *Ibid.*, August 29th, 1914.
‡ *Ibid.*, September 26th, 1914.

concluding: "And to crown all we see, Ireland, which for centuries has whined to Europe for relief against England, now being led by its elected leader to fight for England, that the British Empire may continue to keep its Navy at the throat of Europe."

Ironically, Connolly subsequently answered an English correspondent on the same question,* and grows humorous at the expense of British Socialists who agree with him "but," "except," "only for," and says that the instinct of the slave to take sides with whoever is the enemy of his own particular slave-driver is healthy and makes for freedom, adding that every Socialist must be in favour of freedom of the seas, and realise that as long as one nation dominates the water highways of the world, neither peace nor free industrial development is possible. "The German Empire is a homogenous Empire of self-governing peoples. The British Empire is a hetrogenous collection, in which a very small number of self-governing communities connive at the subjugation by force of a vast number of despotically ruled subject populations. We do not wish to be ruled by either Empire, but we certainly believe that the first-named contains in germ more of the possibilities of freedom and civilisation than the latter."

Particularly significant are two articles in the Scottish Labour weekly, *Forward*. A scathing article "The Latest Massacre in Dublin," † deals with the tragic sequel at Bachelors' Walk, after the Howth gun-running, at the close of July, 1914. "The Dublin workers," he writes, "have shown in the near past that they are not willing slaves, political or social, and, that not even the necessity of the struggle for political freedom, can make them abandon their individual liberties, or weaken their fearless democracy, Hence it became imperative, in the interests of the ruling tyrants, that those guns should be prevented from remaining in the hands of such men. . . . Hence the attempt to

* *Workers' Republic*, March 18th, 1916.
† *Forward*, August 1st, 1914.

disarm the volunteers of Dublin, and hence the fresh massacre of Dublin citizens. Brave heroic Dublin! ever battling for the right, ever consecrating by the blood of your children the weary milestones of the path of progress. A year ago, the capitalist class let loose its wolves and slanderers upon you, jailed, batoned and murdered your sons and daughters, but were unable to destroy your holy aspirations for freedom. To-day, the Government . . . once more springs at your throat and even some of your misguided children, who cheered on the Government in its outrages a year ago, are now ruthlessly slaughtered by that same Government.

"Magnificent Dublin! As you emerged, with spirit unbroken and heart undaunted from your industrial tribulation, so you will arise mightier and more united from the midst of the military holocaust with which this Government of all the treacheries meets your plans for political freedom." He concludes with the significant promise that "Labour will not be swept off its feet in this crush," but realises that the only hope is the strength of the people.

In "A Continental Revolution" in the same paper,* the amazing pre-war progress of the Socialist movement is reviewed—Connolly confesses bitterly that the War has found that movement helpless. "But why go on," he breaks out, "is it not clear as the fact of life itself, that no insurrection of the working class, no general uprising of the forces of Labour could possibly carry with it, or entail a greater slaughter of Socialists than will their participation, as soldiers, in the campaigns of their respective countries. . . . Civilisation is being destroyed before our eyes, the results of generations of propaganda and patient, heroic plodding are being blown into annihilation, from a hundred cannon mouths; thousands of comrades, with whose souls we have lived in fraternal communion, are about to be done to death; those, whose one hope it was to be spared to co-operate in the building the perfect society of the future,

* *Forward*, August 15th, 1914.

are being driven to fraticidal slaughter in a shambles where that hope will lie buried under a sea of blood."

After an emphatic amplification of the statement that a great continental uprising of the working class would end the War, and that, even an unsuccessful attempt at social revolution by armed force, would be less disastrous to the Socialist cause than continued hostilities, we find the writer's views on patriotism. " I make no war on patriotism, never have done. . . . I regard each nation as the possessor of a definite contribution to the common stock of civilisation, and I regard the capitalist class of each nation as being the logical enemy of all the national culture which constitutes that contribution."

A false rumour of Karl Liebknecht's execution evokes from Connolly, " A martyr for conscience sake." * He continues his protest against the policy of participation after formal protest, and strikes this very personal and illuminating note : " I may be only a voice crying in the wilderness, a crank among the community of the wise, but whoever I may be, I must in deference to my own self-respect and the sanctity of my own soul protest against the doctrine that any decree of national honour of theirs [European Cabinets] can excuse a Socialist who serves in a war, which he has denounced as a needless war. . . .

" The war of a subject nation for independence, for its right to live its life, in its own way, may and can be justified as holy and righteous ; the war of a subject class to free itself from the debasing conditions of economic and political slavery, should at all times choose its own weapons and esteem all as sacred instruments of righteousness ; but the war of nation against nation, in interest of royal freebooters and cosmopolitan thieves, is a thing accursed.

" All hail then to our Continental comrade who, in a world of imperial and financial brigands and cowardly trimmers and compromisers, showed mankind that men still know how to die for the holiest of all causes—the

* *Forward*, August 21st, 1914.

sanctity of the human soul, the practical brotherhood of the human race ! "

Connolly's fiery incitements to revolt struck deep notes of approval not alone in the ranks of the Citizen Army, or among the youths of Fianna Eireann,* but far and wide in the ranks of the Irish Volunteers. Typical of the men who drank in James Connolly's teachings was Con Colbert, who was executed for his part in the Insurrection. He took the place of the leader under whom he fought, it is said, because he believed that he personally had fewer friends and would not be so keenly missed, but in this there was more modesty than accuracy. " A boy from Clare," says some reference book. He worked as a clerk in a bakery, large in soul, slim and slender in frame, with tongue as sharp as his humour was keen, while in two smouldering, deep-set pensive eyes, burned the true soul of Ireland."

" The gallant Captain Colbert," Pearse called him in those far-off days when few preached the ideal armed. Alike in winter and summer, he camped out on the Dublin mountain slopes, teaching the young idea in Fianna Eireann to think, march, and shoot, with an eye alert in his daily round for more converts to the creed of Wolfe Tone, the complete man and the complete gospel. Upon Wolfe Tone he would speak for hours to any one in any place, smiling whimsically and getting in shrewd home-thrusts every now and then. He could tell the flaw in any argument ; rhetoric and compromise and politicians he distrusted, while he knew the exact number of parts in any make of gun, or how to go home by the stars in strange places, or what songs to sing at a camp fire.

There were hundreds like him in drill halls, old disused mills and city meeting places throughout Ireland, in the

* A national association of boy scouts, founded by Madame de Markcievicz. To them Connolly wrote in December, 1914 : " May the boys of the Fianna realise that it is their destiny to receive work upon, and transmit to another generation that priceless heritage of noble human endeavour and progress, and, so realising, strive ever to so shape their lives, that they, as custodians, may be worthy of the trust."

grip of a great popular movement, some for excitement, some to have a whack at Sir Edward Carson, and a very respectable number that Pearse and Connolly were fanning to a flame. Con Colbert may be dwelt upon because he was typical. He confessed with regret, at times, that he had found his knowledge of Ireland's history growing hazy, as he strove to realise the full and militant gospel he had learned there. Many books remained unopened on his three small book shelves, so busy was the owner in other and more stirring spheres. But Con read with avidity the mosquito Press, as seditious Republican and Labour prints were known to their enemies, and God knows, sometimes the most serious poets and rhetoricians amused him hugely. People on platforms who waxed over-eloquent brought mirth to his soul, while he was a kind father to all youth with a bee in its bonnet. He was twenty-three when he was shot.

To St. Enda's College, in due course, he came, to instruct P. H. Pearse's students in drill, and soon had marches and counter-marches in the hurling field and tramping feet in the study hall. From the moment he met P. H. Pearse, that master spirit had an ardent if at times a critical disciple. Every Saturday fortnight in the summer months he camped in the hurling field with some friends. Beside his small tent a fire blazed brightly beneath the shades of soaring pine and swaying elms. Songs would be heard late into the night. On Sundays he was away in the hills with the Fianna, training in deadly earnest—one of the largest souls the Lord ever placed in so small a shell. Betimes to listeners, admiring or cynical, he would cry aloud that there would be a fight in Ireland in their day, and it was well to be prepared.

Irish, too, he spoke when he found opportunity, while he lavished every spare halfpenny he had on the cause of Ireland, Gaelic, armed, and free in the widest sense. Soldier of Ireland as Con Colbert was, he never scorned the ways of peace as evil. When freedom came, he was sure, there would be a fair and Gaelic state for every soul within the

land. Upon the much debated question of militarism, he was common-sense itself. Were the country free, he would tell you, she would be a model to all peoples, living in the peace of Christ, but be it well understood, not until she was free. His sympathy was for " the soldiers of freedom in all lands," while his heart went out to the Dublin workers who followed Larkin in 1913. No man, he said, could be a perfect Christian on a low wage, and the new Labour movement in the end would not weaken Ireland's cause—perhaps a not inadequate answer to questions as to " proletarian backgrounds " to 1916, with due regard to the facts already quoted of Dublin social conditions.

For all that, his faith was the faith of rugged-featured, kindly-hearted, unbending, Thomas J. Clarke : all national activity for him led up to the unsheathing of the sword, the peal of cannon and the crack of rifles beneath the standard of the hour—forlorn or triumphant. To such Cuchulainns did James Connolly play the goading *rôle* of Lugh as fiercely as that bitter-tongued charioteer of Celtic legend—as scathing and as outspoken as Fintan Lalor or John Mitchel in 1848, as vehement and at times as unjust in his savage criticisms of those more moderate than himself, caustic ever of Irish jingoism and humbug, yearning wistfully betimes for a rebirth of that International of earlier dreams and hopes, for the path of peaceful reconstruction, but ever looking existing facts steadily in the face He was not one to be left on the door-step. Hence, perhaps, his disconcerting " open diplomacy " in the *Workers' Republic.*

As the days passed, Connolly grew impatient for action. His criticisms of his Republican colleagues and allies aroused considerable suspicion and irritation in quarters, even highly friendly to the imperious and implacable critic himself. Doubtless Connolly's record as militant Labour leader and his uncompromising stand for Socialist ideals and the workers' independence in political and industrial spheres caused an unconscious prejudice, while truth to tell, it was never an easy matter to read his thoughts. His militant declaration that he would strike during the War if

it were only a street fight, undoubtedly, as we have seen, struck responsive chords in the hearts of Thomas J. Clarke, Sean MacDermott and P. H. Pearse.

Among the Irish Volunteer leaders the ideas of Messrs. Eoin MacNeill, Bulmer Hobson and Roger Casement, went to the other extreme. They hoped to build up a military organisation strong enough to guard Irish liberties during the war, and extend them when the critical day of a peace conference should dawn. To Connolly this seemed an illusion:* "England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity." Conferences between Connolly and the Volunteer leaders brought this out clearly, he emphatically declaring that he was glad to understand plainly where they all stood.

"I am neither rash nor cowardly," he declared repeatedly, reinforcing his arguments by an appeal to Irish history, to the tragedy of '48, and Governmental swoops to nip budding insurrections, by seizing leaders who had missed golden opportunities. His attitude was tersely put †: "We believe that in times of peace we should work along the lines of peace to strengthen the nation, and we believe that whatever strengthens and elevates the working class strengthens the nation. But we also believe that in times of war we should act as in war. . . . We shall continue in season and out of season, to teach that 'the far-flung battle line' of England is weakest at the point nearest its heart, that Ireland is in that position of tactical advantage, that a defeat of England in India, Egypt, the Balkans, or Flanders, would not be so dangerous to the British Empire as conflict of armed forces in Ireland, that the time for Ireland's Battle is Now—the place for Ireland's Battle is HERE."

Bitterly ‡ he recalls previous Republican indifference to attacks by even the British Government on the growing Labour movement, and declares that had proper assistance been forthcoming, the Transport Union would be powerful

* *Workers' Republic*, November 13th, 1915; December 4th, 1915.
† *Ibid.*, January, 1916.
‡ *Ibid.*, January, 1916; November 20th, 1915; December 18th, 1915, etc.

enough to paralyse foreign government at will—a prophetic forecast of the General Strike Protests of 1918 and 1920 against conscription and the detention of hunger-strikers. To his moderate opponents, Connolly applied such epithets as " mouthers about war in times of peace," " hysterical and perfervid patriots," " politicians who would attempt to do the work of a revolutionary movement by the methods of a ward canvasser in a municipal election," " leaders who imagine they are Wolfe Tones," etc. Cried Connolly with passion : " Our rulers will stick at nothing to gain their ends. They will continue to rule and rob until confronted by men who will stick at nothing to oppose them." All this at " the grave risk of displeasing alike the perfervid Irish patriot and the British competent military authority."

He insisted that * : " We have spent the best part of our lifetime in striving to create in Ireland, an Irish organisation of Labour willing to do voluntarily for Ireland, what the Governments of Europe are beseeching the trade unions to do for their countries, and have partially succeeded."

Intimate friends have described Connolly as sensitive to an extreme degree, for all his calm exterior, with a tendency at times to the faults of that trait ; a proneness to resent imaginary slights, to groundless suspicions and to fierce personal dislikes. Towards Messrs. Eoin MacNeill and Bulmer Hobson, opposed to, and, poles apart from him, upon the question of tactics, Connolly maintained a relentless hostility, while his criticisms of them and their policy were on a plane more personal and bitter than those of P. H. Pearse.† " Strange " the latter remarked when Connolly dubbed a rather mild pronouncement of Mr. Bulmer Hobson, " flamboyant sunburstery," " how unjust our prejudices can make us ! James himself, withal, is no mean orator either ! "

But Connolly, from first to last in this crisis, was an unflinching and unchanging revolutionary. Preaching from

* *Workers' Republic*, January, 1916.

† " Both Eoin MacNeill and we have acted in the best interests of Ireland," wrote Pearse, subsequently.

Whitman's "defiant deed" text, Connolly deals with the national Fenian and Manchester martyrs' anniversaries in these biting words *: "Was it wise then or commendable for the men of '67 to rebel against the Empire their and our fathers have helped to build and steal? There are thousand of answers to that question, but let the European battlefields of to-day provide the all-sufficient answer."

"All those mountains of Irish dead, all those corpses mangled beyond recognition, all those arms, legs, eyes, ears, fingers, toes, hands, all those shivering, putrefying bodies, once warm, living and tender parts of Irish men and youths—all those horrors buried in Flanders or the Gallipoli Peninsula are all items Ireland pays for being part of the British Empire . . . all these widows . . . fatherless orphans, all these shattered, maimed and diseased wrecks of humanity, who for years will crowd our poorhouses and asylums, or crawl along our roads, affronting our health by their wounds and our comfort by their appeals to pity, all, all are parts of the price Ireland pays for being an integral part of the British Empire. And for what do we pay this price? Answer, ye practical ones! Answer, ye men of prudence, of moderation, of business capacity!"

"Ireland is rotten with slums, a legacy of Empire. The debt of this war will prevent us getting money to replace them with sound, clean, healthy homes. Every big gun fired in the Dardanelles, fired away at every shot the cost of building a home for a working class family. Ireland has the most inefficient educational system and the poorest schools in Europe. The Empire compels us to pay pounds for blowing out the brains of others, for every farthing it allows us to train our own."

"An Empire, on which the sun never sets, cannot guarantee its men and women as much comfort as is enjoyed by the everyday citizen of the smallest, the least military State in Europe. Nations that know not the powers and possessions of Empire have happier, better educated, better equipped men and women than Ireland has ever

* *Workers' Republic*, November 20th, 1915.

known, or can ever know as an integral part of the British Empire."

In similar vein the following week: "We are now living in an era of ruthless blood and iron . . . in any one day of battle in the Dardanelles there were more lives lost than in all the nine months of the Reign of Terror. Should the day ever come when revolutionary leaders are prepared to sacrifice the lives of those under them as recklessly as the ruling class do in every war, there will not be a throne or despotic Government left in the world."

So insistent grew his propaganda on these lines, and so determinedly had he laboured to goad the Irish Volunteers into action by a premature explosion of the rifles of the Citizen Army, that it is said that the heads of the I.R.B. seriously contemplated kidnapping Connolly until his ire had cooled, and the plans for insurrection had matured. Thomas J. Clarke complained to an intimate friend of Connolly that the latter was over-insistent and hypercritical: everything that could be done was being done. In the *Workers' Republic* one notes he sways between hope and fear, ever insisting "that in the crisis of your country's fate your first allegiance is to your country, and not to any leader, executive or committee." *

Indeed, the story was current at the time that some such attempt at silencing Connolly had been effected or was in contemplation. A mysterious absence on Connolly's part for over a week, led to unrest and anxiety in the ranks of the Citizen Army. Upon his return, beyond a vague hint that it concerned his open preparations for revolt, he offered no sensational explanation of his absence. Nor was his mood from February, 1916, onward perceptibly less militant.

Upon one occasion, towards the end of January, 1916, when Connolly had actually determined upon an independent revolt, he was visited by P. H. Pearse and Sean MacDermott who argued at length with him and persuaded him to wait; he would have able allies in a militant enterprise. After an intense mental struggle, with tears in his eyes, Connolly

* *Workers' Republic*, January, 1916.

yielded : " I agree," he said clasping Pearse's hand warmly, " but God grant, Pearse, that you are right ! " Shortly afterwards Pearse himself said that Connolly was indeed a great man, and that it went against the grain to have to restrain him, adding, however, that only the British Government would never credit the Irish Volunteers with the insanity an insurrection implied, Connolly's fiery candour might well prove fatal to the projected coup.

Did James Connolly, then, seriously expect material success against the armed forces of Britain, locked in a mortal struggle, certainly, but militarily stronger than ever before in her history. With certain qualifications, the question can be briefly answered in the negative. One of the most sincere, learned and kindly of Connolly's opponents warned him that his revolutionary mood was good enough to start with, but not good enough to go through with. Connolly, however, though he cried out at times that all revolution was a leap in the dark,* that the wisest plans and the most favourable circumstances could not guarantee success, that the odds were always a thousand to one against insurgents, that betimes one had to start without guns and get them afterwards,† had his head on his shoulders. Like his Republican allies and more moderate opponents in the Volunteer councils, he was well aware that without foreign aid an insurrection could have but one inevitable end. The ultimate justification, he always claimed, lay rather in what was aspired to rather than what was accomplished.‡

At one stage, indeed, Connolly and his colleagues had hopes that a well-planned and general rising might last long enough to shake British credit and power seriously in Ireland—with far-reaching effects on the fortunes of the war and Ireland's ultimate status thereafter. " God help us all should we win," said a prominent Republican half-jestingly. " James will guillotine half of us as too

* *Workers' Republic*, November 13th, 1915 ; February 19th, 1916.

† *Irish Worker*, September 5th, 1914. Connolly declares in speech at Beresford Place : " Revolutions do not start with rifles. Start first and get your rifles after."

‡ *Workers' Republic*, March 11th, 1916.

moderate!" To the end James Connolly was convinced that artillery would never be used against a Dublin in revolt; a capitalist army would never destroy capitalist property while its use, he thought, would be interpreted at home and abroad as a sign of a German landing, and that forces other than a hostile rabble held the Irish capital.

But when James Connolly actually marched out to battle on Easter Monday, 1916, he had no illusions as to what he was doing or the fate before him. "We are marching out to be slaughtered," he calmly informed his friend, William O'Brien, on the steps of Liberty Hall. "Personally I have no fears or regrets, I have had a full life, and wouldn't ask for a better end to it." Some days before, he had addressed the Citizen Army upon the gravity of the situation, stressing the certainty of dangerous and dramatic events, adding that no man, who was unwilling to face certain death need hesitate to draw back even then. "Let him hand in his gun and nothing the worse will be thought of him," added Connolly, who, indeed, later vainly but earnestly joined in the exhortations of P. H. Pearse to the heroic O'Rahilly, not to enter an insurrection to which the latter was sincerely and conscientiously opposed.

"Things are desperate, indeed," cried a well-known Irish-Ireland poet, as he watched Connolly in the *rôle* of Commandant-General of the Dublin area during the revolt, a very Kitchener behind sandbags and loopholes, lit by lurid flames, the atmosphere vibrant with the deadly rattle of Gatling, machine-gun and rifle, moans of rudely bandaged men, and crash of falling buildings, "Things are desperate, indeed, when this anti-militarist, this humanitarian, this Internationalist leads us into this!" And about the same time, the only sincere pacifist in Ireland, Sheehy-Skeffington, who had sighed for this same captain's return to peaceful paths, was falling beneath a fatal volley in Portobello Barracks. Truly here the stuff of tragedy!

But Connolly was never a pacifist at heart, nor, indeed, professedly, less than ever in these last days as he moved, ate and slept, in a small room off a corridor in Liberty Hall,

an automatic pistol in his pocket, and three Citizen Army men with loaded rifle and bayonet within call, active as ever in inciting to revolt and urging action, in season and out of season, watching consignments of arms arrive, and noting with satisfaction the growing stacks of tin cans an active section of Citizen Army munitioners industriously converted into rough but effective bombs. Tension grew, there was conflict in Irish Volunteer and Dublin Castle councils alike, between the parties of peace and war, a breathless race between Republican and Kildare Street Club diehards. And Connolly grew impatient and uneasy. Would the day never dawn ? Would Dublin Castle swoop first ?

Eventually with its rumours, mobilisations and counter-mobilisations, Easter Eve arrived and passed. Sunday, April 23rd, 1916, and the nights preceding were times of tension, feverish preparation for the coming blow, conferences between opposing parties. People continued to make bombs and take away each other's characters with zest and fury. Brooding and watchful, Connolly remained in his Liberty Hall room. The leaders lay low and the Volunteers held their guns. Pearse thoughtfully armed himself, bade farewell to the Hermitage, and cycled to a friend's house in the city. " Providence is with us," he said laughingly, before he went down the Rathfarnham roads.

With Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order, the unexpected happened on the Sunday, and the country trembled between divided counsels. Was it to be, asked Connolly and Pearse in council, a repetition of Ireland's eternal gesture on the eve of revolt, an arm raised to strike, falling limp and nerveless at her side ? Casement, disillusioned of Prussia and all things Prussian, was a prisoner on the Kerry coast. " We are sitting on a gunpowder barrel," said some one.

Again intervened the unexpected. Death, dismay, ruin, fire and war came with noon on Easter Monday into the streets of the capital. An odd thousand men, all told, rose up in Dublin, Enniscorthy, Galway and elsewhere, whilst in

Cork—alert and bewildered by conflicting commands—Terence MacSwiney watched, he whose bloodless defiance was yet to move mankind to the very ends of the earth.

Dublin was held in the grip of some 700 Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army men. From the General Post Office, Boland's Mill, Jacob's biscuit factory, the Four Courts, the South Dublin Union and other positions tricolours flew. Many houses in proximity to these were also occupied, and with less noise and excitement than many a public meeting creates. Shots rang outside Portobello Barracks and Dublin Castle as the Irish Republic was proclaimed to a startled world : news, wireless spreads far and wide. As a lancer regiment retires before a determined fire from the Post Office windows, dazed crowds—impelled by turns with fear or curiosity—re-gathered to watch the insurgent flags fly nearer the Irish sky than ever before in history. Indifferent, hostile or enthusiastic, gravely debating, while food grows scarce ; whether MacNeill is a British spy, or Connolly an *agent-provocateur*, or Pearse and MacDonagh magniloquent maniacs. Was it all a holiday stunt to vex Mr. Birrell, or had the Germans landed ?

Looters emerged, striding in their frenzy, through the plate-glass windows of rich and well-stocked shops. Later, batons and shots over their heads drive them from the main streets. " A great day for the poor ! " cried some. Volleys and sharp explosions resounded and resounded through the city. Wounds, blood, and anguish, arrived to remain as settled incidents in an atmosphere charged with death.

From small outbreaks the main thoroughfare roared upwards in a huge and hideous furnace. For time had vanished and few cared to ask, in that waking dream, what hour or day was passing.

Relentlessly an iron and fiery English ring gripped the insurgents tighter. Some crazed or drunken men ventured into the lines of fire to fall pierced with bullets, dotting the pavements in huddled and inert heaps, with all the strange stillness of the dead. The very air was alive with the rumble of artillery, the sharp and constant rattle of machine guns,

the dire moaning of bullets. A gun-boat crept up the Liffey and battered Liberty Hall to ruins. British soldiers poured into Dublin in thousands. Higher and higher mounted the ruins, bleaker and bleaker grew the streets.

In the city many writhed, in an indescribable agony of spirit, of depression or mean rage, in face of that terrific gesture of the Irish Republican Army. Would a single man survive? some asked, and a few wondered whether those survivors would ever believe in a God again, or in aught else but a British Providence, for, in truth, despite fantastic rumours of Jim Larkin marching with 10,000 from Sligo, and German warships and transports in the Bay beyond, British Providence was then evidently a very powerful personage. But not to James Connolly or his followers, stubborn, grim, calm, indifferent and gay by turns, nor in County Dublin, where Richard Mulcahy and Thomas Ashe take the field at Ashbourne. "We, too, are Irishmen!" cry the Royal Irish Constabulary who surrender.

Nor to those comrades whom Eamonn Ceannt, away in the South Dublin Union, cheered in a grimly-held position, where Cathal Brugha with barking pistol had fallen, defiant and riddled, in a pool of blood, asking his fellow-soldiers to sing "God Save Ireland" till the end came—strange forecast of his tragedy, six years later in the Civil War. The noble side of war shone out with a terrible and vivid splendour; dawns rose and evenings fell, amidst resounding and continuous volleys, over the sea of chimney stacks, roofs, towers and spires—clear dawns and swift nights.

Now James Connolly's days are to prove few, numbered, but unforgettable. A stoic, green-clad, burly, manly figure, he gazes grimly upon the mixed forces in his roughly barricaded fortress, where there is a constant call to arms, and snipers with tense eyes and heated barrels forget all else except a desire to reach their targets. In some cases, in happy ignorance, by war's tragic irony relatives in different uniforms fire upon one another.

Certainly Connolly finds it hard not to experience a deep respect for all these average men and women under his

command, who endure the grim ordeal so calmly; his odd 120 Citizen Army men, Irish Volunteers in trim green uniforms, variously armed from shot gun to modern rifle; the Cumann na m-Ban, who improvise hospitals in rooms, where men, with ghastly hurts and blood-soaked bandages, breathe heavily. The iron English ring closes tighter upon the doomed positions; the fiery blazes move fiercely with every passing hour. Behind lurid barricades of coal sacks three rows deep, the defenders make preparations for a last and desperate stand; hand grenade, shot-gun, pike in readiness—while crashing concrete floors, and gusts of waving smoke, mock the garrison's prolonged resistance The "Soldiers' Song" is heard through the building. Hose, axe and bucket are used in vain, when a well planted petrol shell on the building's roof, marks the beginning of the end.

And James Connolly is the brain of the revolt—vigilant and taciturn. "It's grand!" he had cried, glancing as he had entered the first day, with twinkling eyes, keen and proud ever, but moist betimes in this five days' inferno, upon two tricolours waving over the Post Office. High above them a green flag floats, emblazoned in orange letters thereon the words "Irish Republic." Even when the fire will spend itself, and a rain of shrapnel sweeps the roof bare of chimney stack, slate and glass, or the floors crash round the defenders' ears, or the garrison lines up to surrender some hundred yards away these tricolours still float outlined, with unbroken flagstaff, against a clear April sky. But Connolly is not admiring clouds as he watches the red dawn he has prayed for. For had he not prayed for the day, now here, when Flanders' trenches would be safer than Dublin streets for certain inestimable persons? "Thanks be to God," he shouts, heartily gripping Pearse's hand, "thanks be to God, Pearse, that we have lived to see this day!" . . .

Pictures—grim and pathetic—rise to haunt the memory of his bearing in that last scene. When, at the head of a handful of followers, he issues forth on a sortie into a flaming, ruin-starred and death-raked street, a sniper's

dum-dum * bullet strikes his instep. Already suffering from a flesh wound in the arm, he is borne back to the headquarters which " are the brain and soul of our great movement." And for a moment even the iron nerve of Pearse falters. . . . Or later, as he is borne beneath a Red cross flag to a Moore Street house, and the end draws nearer. . . . But why continue ?

Before another month had passed James Connolly had died the death of a soldier of freedom, after an unconditional surrender to save his followers from the flames and his fellow citizens from bullet, fire and famine. He had struck his last blow and was satisfied with Pearse that Ireland's honour was saved, and that on some future day others would follow. Wounded in the instep, half dying, and heavily guarded, he was borne to hospital, some thirty soldiers as escort, lest he should even then escape. " The Socialists will never understand why I am here," he cried soon afterwards, asking his daughter whether their Press had commented on the revolt. " They will all forget that I am an Irishman." And he added that the British Government would execute him as it had executed young Scheepers in South Africa.

Well that Government knew, he continued, that he would have another try if he lived, for he would never acquiesce in their conquest of his country. News arrived of his co-signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic falling before firing squads ; and whatever love of life remained fled. " Shoot away ! " he told his court-martial, " but I am dying for Ireland." And shoot away they did.

Aye ! Truly he died for Ireland on May 12th at dawn in Kilmainham Jail, lifted helpless from a stretcher to a chair, two Franciscans beside him, head falling to one side, and hands so weak that they had to be secured behind him. Without, a new Ireland, strange, firm and fierce grew strong within a night. . . In this wise died James Connolly with a prayer on his lips, " for all brave men who do their duty

* So a doctor who dressed the wound informed the writer : Gangrene set in almost immediately.

according to their lights." * He came before his time, but Ireland has moved nearer to his dream since he lived and died. The reconquest of Ireland, whose prophet he was, moves on, despite blood, chaos, stupidity, despair and turmoil, to the high and perfect commonwealth of his dreams—a monument more pleasing to that incomparable and remorseless shade than any in bronze or marble alone.

* "He was the bravest man I have known," said Surgeon Tobin, who attended him. Surgeon Tobin and Brig.-General Lowe, who accepted the surrender, are said to have earnestly appealed to the military authorities to stop the executions. An Irish corporal who travelled with Connolly to Kilmainham gives a slightly different version of the execution: "He gripped the sides of the chair to steady himself, and held his head high, waiting for the volley."

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Connolly's principal published works are: "Erin's Hope" (1897), "The New Evangel" (1901), "Socialism Made Easy" (1909), "Labour, Nationality and Religion" (1910), "Songs of Freedom" (1907), "Labour in Irish History" (1910), "Reconquest of Ireland" (1915). "Labour in Ireland"—the two last works in a single volume, with an introduction by Robert Lynd—has been issued by Messrs. Maunsel. Most of Connolly's other pamphlets are obtainable from the Irish Transport Workers' Union, Parnell Sq., Dublin, which has also published "The Axe to the Root," with an introduction, and the article "Old Wine in New Bottles." Many of Connolly's earlier writings have been reprinted in the Transport Union's official organ, the *Voice of Labour*, from 1917 onwards, while in the files of *Forward* (Glasgow) and the *Irish Worker* is much unused material from his pen.

In 1896 Connolly edited James Fintan Lalor's "Rights of Ireland and Faith of a Felon"; in 1897 the "'98 Readings." He was a contributor to the following journals: *Shan Van Vocht* (Belfast), *Labour Leader*, *Socialist* (Glasgow), *Forward*, *New Age*, *International Socialist Review*, *Fianna* (Dublin), *Irish Review*, *Irish Nation*, and numerous American Socialist journals.

In March, 1916, the Workers' Dramatic Company produced in

Liberty Hall a three-act Fenian play, "Under Which Flag?" by James Connolly. A characteristic criticism of play and players by Francis Sheehy Skeffington appeared in the *Workers' Republic.*

"The contrasted flags of the title," he wrote, "are, of course, those of the Empire and of Ireland, the dramatic conflict is fought around the person of Frank O'Donnell, a farmer's son, who in the first act announces his intention of joining the British Army, but at the end of the third act, having been shown the right path by his parents, his sweetheart, and the old blind patriot, Brian MacMahon, joins the fighting forces of the I.R.B. instead. The dialogue is excellent—entirely unforced, and in harmony with the characters. The use of the soliloquy in the second act must, however, be condemned as dramatically inartistic—though Mr. Connolly could plead the example of a great English dramatist who is more honoured in Germany than in his own country. Pithy sentences embody the author's national creed. . . . Mr. Connolly has devoted particularly loving care to the characterisation of Brian, who stands out as the unforgettable figure. . . . This was also the best acted *rôle;* Sean Connolly's . . . portrayal was extremely powerful . . . indeed, dominated the entire second act."

I must acknowledge here the kindness of Alderman William O'Brien, Dublin, an intimate friend of James Connolly and veteran in the Irish Labour Movement, who has furnished me with many facts and much of the material used in this book. Cathal O'Shannon, Dublin, another intimate of Connolly, has also kindly supplied me with some interesting personal sidelights and reminiscences of him.

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